John Kerry, Terrorist Buster

Washington MONTHLY

WHAT IF HE WINS?

Predictions by:

Paul Begala, Christopher Buckley, Elaine Kamarck, Cass Sunstein, E.J. Dionne, Grover Norquist, Todd Gitlin, Jeff Greenfield, Gideon Rose, Kevin Drum, Gregg Easterbrook, James K. Galbraith, Sebastian Mallaby, David Greenberg, Nancy S. Dwight, Mickey Edwards

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Porter Goss, CIA yes-man • Jason DeParle on how to fix welfare reform • James Warren on David Brock • Joshua Hammer on Richard Ben Cramer

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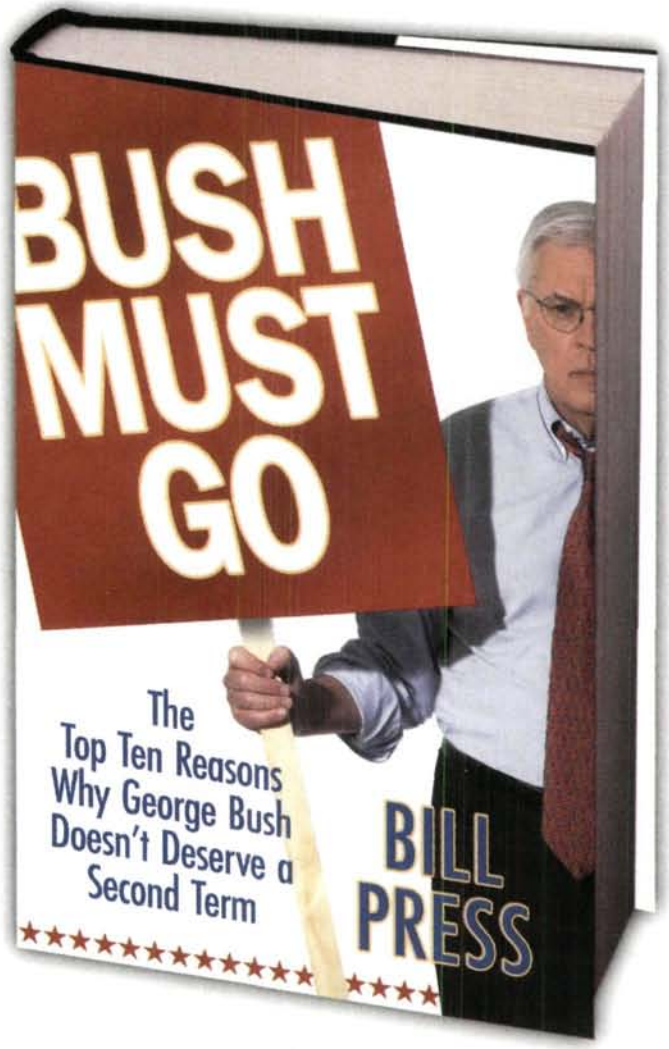
BUSH MUST GO



"There are a million reasons to get rid of George Bush.
But Bill Press hits the most important ones."
—JAMES CARVILLE, author of *Had Enough?*

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Washington MONTHLY

Volume 36, No. 9
September 2004

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Letters

Twin Brooks

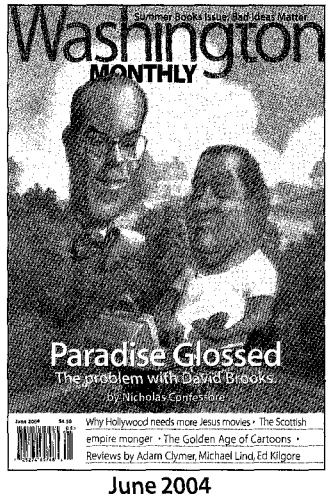
Thanks to Nicholas Confessore ("Paradise Glossed," June) on David Brooks's "frequently dishonest caricatures" and "unreliable generalizations." While conservatives accuse liberals of starting "class warfare" by merely pointing out disparities in wealth (a classic case of shooting the messenger), Brooks and some of his colleagues on the right came up with their own twisted brand of class warfare, painting liberals as snooty "elitists" and conservatives as salt-of-the-earth regular folks. And they sometimes bolster their case with assertions that are patently untrue, such as Brooks's statement about "upscale areas everywhere" voting for Al Gore and his characterization of the Democrats as the party of aristocrats — as if the Bush family is not an old-money clan.

Trudy Ring
Burbank, Calif.

Confessore is right on the mark and articulates a problem I've had with David Brooks. There are moments in reading him — both in *Bobos in Paradise* and in his articles (which all made their way into *On Paradise Drive*) — in which some aspect of American life suddenly becomes crystal clear that you feel like it was always at the tip of your tongue. But the problem arises when this insight leads you to impute to Brooks that sort of acumen in all of his observations. I've reluctantly come to accept that this book is mostly a bunch of specious connections and cutesy epithets.

But Confessore falters when he starts raising specific objections to Brooks's specific stereo/archetypes. He appeals to such a rigorous standard of descriptive accuracy that he undermines his very sharp and insightful overall point — that Brooks wills the world to fit his oh-so-bright description of it — by acting like a pedantic teenager scoring points by marking obvious and inevitable exceptions to nonetheless valuable generalizations. An example is Confessore's objection to the line about cars from countries with foreign policies hostile to America. Brooks's line is non-political — the Audis and Volvos (and no American or Japanese cars) are part of a broader *mise-en-scene*, and the foreign-policy line is simply intended as a roundabout and clever way of describing, accurately, the look and feel of the professional zones; whatever motivated the buyers of these cars is immaterial. A similar critique can be made of Confessore's subsequent parsing.

Sam Parker
via email



June 2004

"Brooks and others on the right came up with their own twisted brand of class warfare, painting liberals as snooty "elitist" and conservatives as salt-of-the-earth regular folks."
—Trudy Ring

Faulty Ivory Tower

As a working historian with often-dusty fingers, I was pleased to see Benjamin Wallace-Wells's ("Right Man's Burden," June) balanced portrayal of the "edutainment" mini-tycoon Niall Ferguson, who has made a success as a "historian" without doing much work, and whose quality of work falls with each successive volume from a not-very-high start point. It's best to let the false prophets condemn themselves, and Wallace-Wells does a nice job of letting Ferguson show us just what a fake he actually is, simply by letting him rattle on.

Mott T. Greene
Professor of Science and Values
University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, Wash.

The Ferguson piece was interesting. I think some of Ferguson's observations are cogent, though not necessarily his remedies.

The difference between British and American approaches to empire is that Britain was keen on exporting people and investment capital and assumed that benefits to the home islands would follow. Being British was good, but knowing the native cultures was also important. The United States exports business models, rotates its people overseas, but not long enough for them to become too friendly with the natives, the better to help bring home the profits to the homeland. Americans view overseas assignments as assignments, not lives.

In short, Britain was secure that being British was special enough, while the United States, like the Soviet Union, views its specialness as ideological and subject to repeated verification. The Brit expats may have had their book clubs and parties but borrowed the Indian word *gymkhana* for their horse competitions and brought it home. The Yanks bring their Coke, fries, and Washington area-code cell phones to the Green Zone in Baghdad.

The only lasting American imperial power is cultural, the soft power of Joseph Nye: music, film, art, technology, and business

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know how. That is powerful and lasting, and sadly underutilized by the present ruling elite in Washington.

Prof. Jeffrey Harris
Plasma Research Laboratory
Australian National University
Canberra, Australia

Cartoon Creativity

Justin Peters's "Toon In" (June) on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim is excellent. While much of today's TV comedy is in the hands of Hollywood executives trying to imitate past successes (If you loved "Friends," check out "Coupling"), Adult Swim shows are created by a group of guys in Atlanta who've been given the freedom to take chances. Their reward? Higher ratings than Letterman/Leno at a fraction of the cost.

Jed Spingarn
Co-Executive Producer, "The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius"

Bible Lesson

Amy Sullivan should do more research and *The Washington Monthly* fact-checking ("Jesus Christ, Superstar," June).

First, Kirk Douglas did not win an Academy Award for *Spartacus*. He was not even nominated for this film (Peter Ustinov earned Best Supporting Actor honors and Alex North was nominated for Best Score). If it is any consolation to Sullivan, Kirk Douglas did receive an honorary Academy Award in 1996.

Second, *Spartacus* is not about religion unless you consider freedom "faith-based." It is the fictionalized account of a 73-71 BCE slave revolt against pre-Imperial Rome. Had Sullivan bothered to check even the most basic of film references she would have discovered this fact. Maybe the crucifixion scenes at the end confused her.

Third, in mentioning other "Bible movies," Sullivan ignores religious epics such as *The Bible* (1966) and *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), as well as numerous TV movies and mini-series (*Abraham* in '94; *Joseph* in '95; Solomon in '97; *Noah's Ark* in '99). She also ignores recent TV offerings such as "Joan of Arcadia" and past series like "Highway to Heaven" ('84-'89).

Your readers expect much more than "flip" interpretations of politics and culture from your fine publication.

John Nelson
Santa Monica, Calif.

Sullivan responds: A careful read of my article reveals that I note religiously-themed entertainment disappeared in the 1960s. The Bible *and* The Greatest Story Ever Told *are among the last of the Hollywood Bible blockbusters. I also cited "the exception of a few bland made-for-television movies" and made at least implicit a distinction between productions based on biblical stories and those — like "Joan of Arcadia" or "7th Heaven" that simply involve religious characters. While* Spartacus *was hardly as religious as other contemporary fare such as* The Ten Commandments, *its producers clearly meant to place it in a biblical context, including a voiceover ending that noted Spartacus's son was born free, but in a century, a man would come who would set all men free. Kirk Douglas did not win an Oscar for his role as the rebellious slave. My apology for that error.*

CORRECTION:
Gen. Wesley Clark was never a registered Republican as Paul Glastris wrote ("Perverse Polarity," June). He was a registered independent from Arkansas.

Washington MONTHLY

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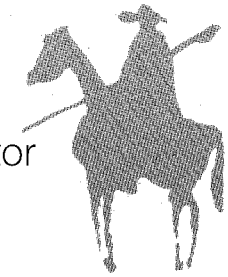
Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor



November delight

Poetic justice on Nov. 2 is forecast by a mock election held by the National Association of Student Councils. George W. Bush wins the popular vote but loses the electoral vote to John Kerry.

The GOP's madam

Marlene Baldwin has been named California Businesswoman of the Year by the National Republican Congressional Committee. Baldwin now sells direct-mail advertising, but before that, according to *The San Francisco Chronicle*, she spent "fifteen years as the most famous brothel madam in San Francisco." When advised of this fact by the *Chronicle*, a spokesman for the Republican group said, "Really? We did not know that, I'm sure." Anyway, he explained, the award recognizes contributions to Republican causes or Republican candidates.

The dodger vote

During his speech at the Democratic National Convention, Bill Clinton won my respect with his willingness to acknowledge his own failure to serve while expressing admiration for Kerry's courage in Vietnam. This election could turn on whether most of his fellow draft-avoiders can do the same. The fact is that there are more of them than there are of those who served.

Clinton himself provides the relevant facts in *My Life*. During the Vietnam era, 10.9 million men served in the military, but 16 million avoided the draft. I know enough of them to know that many have experienced wildly conflicting emotions about not having served—pride at having opposed the war mixed with guilt over those who were killed or maimed in their stead. Some, like Clinton, have worked their way through this tangle of feelings to an acceptance of what they did that leaves them capable of honoring those who served. But for some of the others, their self-hatred translates into hatred of Kerry. Let's hope that they are few in number, or at least that the worst of them, the chicken-hawks who supported the war but avoided serving in it, are already Republicans.

Bush's light duty

By the way, I think it important that the Democrats and their allies, although not Kerry himself, make sure that Bush is exposed as a draft-dodger. Most people today think of National Guardsmen as standing a good chance of having to go to war, as they did in World War II, and as they are doing today in Iraq. But every voter should know that during Vietnam, the Guard was widely recognized as a way of avoiding danger. That's why so many young men tried to get in, so many in fact that Bush's father had to use political influence to help his son land one of the prized slots. Finally, no voter should be left unaware that on his application for the Guard, there was a box asking if you wanted to serve overseas that Bush checked "no."

People problems

The major defect of the 9/11 Commission's report is its failure to face the government's personnel problem. 9/11 was a failure of people as well as of the systems that the report blames. There was a lot of incompetence in the FBI, the CIA, the INS, the FAA, and the White House. Stupid decisions were made. George W. Bush ignored the early August 2001 warning in the President's Daily Briefing that was headed "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." And as CIA veteran Ray McGovern pointed out to William Raspberry of *The Washington Post*, the FBI's Spike Owens "received a $20,000 cash award from the administration for his duties in safeguarding the American people" after rejecting unread that report from the FBI's field office about "all those Arab fellows training on aircraft but with no interest in learning how to land them."

Out of sight

Have you noticed this past summer how stories of American soldiers dying in Iraq quietly moved to the back pages? On July 9, for example, *Los Angeles Times* put the story of five G.I.'s being killed on page 7; *The New York Times* put it on page 8. On July 22, "U.S. Troops Dying Two Per Day Since Turnover In Iraq" made page 10 of *The Washington Times*. We need another dramatic reminder of the costs of this war such as Ted Koppel gave us in March. And this time, stories of the wounded, nearing 6,000 at last count, need to be told. Many Americans have no idea of the terrible injuries that have been suffered, and of the impact those injuries are having on the lives of the wounded as they return to the civilian world.

Was I right?

Just before we went to war in Iraq, I wrote in this space, "This country has been conned by Karl Rove and the super-hawks. They have succeeded in changing the subject from Bush's failures and embarrassments, putting Iraq first on the national agenda for nearly six months at the expense of more important matters—like finding

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Osama bin Laden, securing peace between Israel and Palestine, drastically improving the FBI and CIA's ability to deal with terrorism, keeping nuclear weapons from being used by nations that already have them, including North Korea, and engineering economic recovery here at home. If we end up paying practically all the bill for Iraq and subsequent military occupation, that money won't be there for badly needed health and education programs ... Once you consider these other higher priorities, the danger from Iraq isn't nearly imminent enough to justify war."

I haven't changed my mind.

Farming turkeys

In my own experience, what protects incompetence in the bureaucracy is the spirit of collegiality that encourages government officials not to blow the whistle on the other guy's ineptitude lest he call attention to theirs. How else did the FBI's Robert Hanssen and the CIA's Aldrich Ames survive for so long, despite plenty of evidence that Hanssen was weird and Ames a drunk? Usually the worst that happens to such turkeys is that they are "farmed." The supervisor who has caught on engineers a transfer of the turkey to another branch of his organization. While this is usually seen as a great bureaucratic triumph for the supervisor, the catch is that the turkey may be able to do, as Ames did, yet greater harm where he was farmed.

Richard Clarke, in the only commentary other than Raspberry's I've seen that deals with the failure of the 9/11 Commission to deal with the personnel problem, says that "the only way to infuse these key agencies with creative new blood is to overhaul their hiring and promotion practices." The key units of the FBI and the CIA, Clarke observes, "are headed almost exclusively by those who joined [the agencies] young and worked their way up. This has created uniformity, insularity, risk-aversion, torpidity and often mediocrity."

Government tends to attract people looking for job security who come in risk-averse, a tendency which only grows as risk might imperil their slow but steady rise up the ladder.

The comfort class

Tom Ridge has told colleagues he may retire in November. The *AP* reports that he needs to make more money in order to "comfortably put his two children through college." The man is making $175,000 a year. That should make them very comfortable.

Gasping for airplay

During the Democratic convention, FOX News channel gave less than one minute to Al Gore's speech (this, courtesy of that great devotee of fair play Bill O'Reilly) and not much more to Jimmy Carter and Ted Kennedy. MSNBC's Chris Matthews cut off Al Sharpton, righteously proclaiming, "This is a partisan act here," as if political conventions were ever anything else. Even NBC's Tom Brokaw and CBS' Dan Rather were guilty. On Monday night, they chose to feature 10 minutes of themselves instead of a speech by the Rev. David Alston, the black clergyman who was a swift-boat crewmate of John Kerry's. On Thursday night, two of the big three networks did not show the eight high-ranking military officers, including two former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who endorsed Kerry. CBS did not show Max Cleland's introduction of Kerry. It should have—we owe him. I also thought Alston deserved to be heard. And it was important for the country to know that respected military leaders believed Kerry could be trusted with responsibility for the nation's security.

Truth lags

The truth is having a hard time catching up with the lies of the Bush gang. When asked whether there was a partnership "between Saddam Hussein in Iraq and al Qaeda," 56 percent of the respondents in a late June poll said yes, and only 28 percent disagreed. The respondents were also asked whether Saddam had advance notice of the 9/11 attacks. When the same question was posed late in 2001, 79 percent said it was very or somewhat likely. Now, despite abundant evidence to the contrary, that figure has only declined to 68 percent.

Smoke screen

Why are state legislatures rushing to help tobacco companies? "Thirty states have adopted contro-

SWEET REVENGE

It seems that a passenger on an Aeroflot flight out of Moscow was beaten up by drunken flight attendants. Deplorable as this may be, it has to quicken the hearts of countless flight attendants who have struggled to pacify passengers with far more than one too many.

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versial laws in recent years offering protection for cigarette makers that lose massive verdicts," reports *The Wall Street Journal*'s Vanessa O'Connell. Why such solicitude for the bad guys? Tobacco company lobbyists have convinced legislators that large verdicts threaten the ability of the companies to pay their share of the giant 1998 tobacco settlement. States have come to rely on this money as part of their regular revenue stream. So now they have become allies of the very people whose wrongdoing the settlement was supposed to punish.

Higher Ed, Inc.

While I was working for the Peace Corps back in the 1960s, I began to notice that the idealism of the students who were volunteering for our and other worthy causes was accompanied by a less noble but growing trend towards commercialism by their universities. Prestigious institutions were committing larceny with outrageous charges for what they called "overhead" on contracts for the training of our volunteers. Professors were opening outside offices to moonlight as "consultants." It seemed that every second floor on Mount Auburn Street in Cambridge, Mass., housed another consulting firm.

The trend was only in its infancy. Potential profits have soared. Now we have what James B. Twitchell, writing in the *Wilson Quarterly*, describes as "a $250-$270 billion business." He calls it Higher Ed., Inc. Just one institution, Harvard, has an endowment of $20 billion, which Twitchell describes as "greater than the assets of the Dell Computer Company, the gross national product of Libya, the net worth of all but five of the *Forbes* 400, or the holdings of all the non-profits in the world except the Roman Catholic Church … Every two weeks, Harvard's endowment throws off enough cash to cover all undergraduate tuition." Instead it adds to the endowment and increases salaries for faculty and administrators. Harvard's five top money managers, according to *The New York Times*, were paid $105 million last year.

No voter should be left unaware that on Bush's application for the Guard, there was a box asking if you wanted to serve overseas that he checked "no."

Those entrepreneurial professors I began to encounter in the '60s are having their talents harnessed by Higher Education, Inc. to tap another fiscal oil well. At the University of Pittsburgh, reports Bernard Wysocki of *The Wall Street Journal*, Dr. David Kuptor, the head of the psychiatry department, has helped the university move from 12th to eighth in the amount of grants received from the National Institutes of Health in just five years, by requiring his students "to attend boot camps" for writing applications for grants, and by paying researchers bonuses of as much as $50,000 a year based on how much NIH money they bring to Pitt.

Higher Ed, Inc. is also going in big for marketing. The student is seen as a customer, whose every need must be satisfied. Education as an objective is being lost in a scramble to provide "Olympic-quality gyms, Broadway-style theaters for plays, special trainers, and glitzy student unions with movie theaters." My favorite is Washington State University, which offers its students the "largest Jacuzzi in the West."

Punch drunk

Here's a man-bites-dog story from *The International Herald Tribune* which you may have missed. It seems that a passenger on an Aeroflot flight out of Moscow was beaten up by drunken flight attendants. Deplorable as this may be, it has to quicken the hearts of countless flight attendants who have struggled to pacify passengers who have had far more than one too many.

Another civil action

It is true that trial lawyers can be greedy troublemakers, but they can also be useful. Here's an example.

Since 1981, DuPont has been making around $200 million a year from the manufacture of Teflon. It has also been suppressing studies showing that a chemical used in making Teflon is toxic. A 1981 study showed that the chemical was, reports *Los Angeles Times*, "toxic to newborn rats, killing some and causing some to be born with eye and facial deformities … Within a few months, DuPont discovered that two babies out of a group of five born to employees exposed to the chemical at a plant in Parkersburg, W.Va., had similar rare birth defects … The company found [the chemical] in the blood supply of its female workers … and also learned … that the chemical had contaminated the water supply of 30,000 Ohio River Valley residents." The Environmental Protection Agency is now proposing to fine DuPont several hundred million dollars. But, and this is my point, the EPA would not have found out what DuPont had done if the facts had not been uncovered by discovery in a lawsuit.

Name games

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has long been one of the most important agencies in Washington. Unfortunately, it has been handicapped by a name that absolutely reeks of dullness. Its work—of finding out for Congress what is going right and wrong in the rest of the government—is crucial,

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extending far beyond accounting. So, to give the public a better idea of what it is, it has changed its name. The initials are still the same, but now they stand for Government Accountability Office. It still doesn't exactly suggest naked ladies dancing on the lawn, but it's definitely an improvement.

Ralph's right point

Occasionally, although increasingly rarely, I find myself agreeing with Ralph Nader's plague on both your houses. The latest of these occasions was when I learned the following, from a column by Jeffrey Birnbaum in *The Washington Post*: There are regular meetings between Democratic lobbyists and Democratic Senate staff members (every other Monday), between Democratic lobbyists and House minority leader Nancy Pelosi's chief of staff (every Friday), and between Republican lobbyists and Republican senators (every other Tuesday and every other Wednesday).

Private planes and nightclubs

You may have noticed that the aircraft that caused all that security hullabaloo just before the Ronald Reagan memorial service at the Capitol was the private plane of the governor of Kentucky. Many other governors have their own planes. Why? I suspect it is because they see the president riding around in Air Force One and want their own toy. Many of these governors also have their own security details, like the president's secret service. In the case of the governors, their only real function seems to be to protect the governors from indignant voters.

Even mayors are getting into the act. Mayor Anthony Williams of the District of Columbia is an example. "The Executive Protection Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department has dispatched police officers, sergeants, detectives and lieutenants on more than 130" occasions, reports Jim McElhatton of *The Washington Times*, running up $320,000 in expenses, "including bills at a luxury beachfront hotel in Hawaii, a Las Vegas night-club, and the Tavern on the Green restaurant in New York."

Publish or perish

A new insight into the CIA's failures on Iraq comes from the 9/11 Commission's report. It seems that the agency's analysts have created a university-like culture, in which "its men and women tended to judge one another by the quantity and quality of their publications (in this case classified publications)... particular value is attached to having a contribution included in one of the classified 'daily newspapers'... or, better still, selected for inclusion in the President's Daily Brief."

Unfortunately, the commission did not take the obvious next step, which is to point out that every signal emanating from the Bush White House said "we want information that justifies war with Iraq." Ambitious analysts who wanted their work included in the President's Daily Brief knew that providing such information was their ticket to success.

Shallow background

Another problem with the CIA's analysts is that many of them have no background in the area they cover. *U.S. News & World Report* tells of what a leading scholar found when he recently met with the CIA's top analysts for Southeast Asia. Half had no experience in the region at all; none knew any of the languages.

U.S. News reveals another shocking fact about the CIA's clandestine service. As of April, it had fewer agents abroad than the FBI has in its New York field office—and that figure is 1,100. This raises two questions. Why does the FBI need 1,100 in New York? And, what do the CIA's other 20,000 or so employees do all day?

The CSI effect

The "CSI effect" is what prosecutors are calling it. Jurors who have seen all those television crime shows have come to expect "DNA, fingerprints, and other irrefutable scientific evidence," reports the Associated Press. The problem is that in Baltimore, for example, fewer than 10 percent of the homicide cases in the state attorney's office involve fingerprint or DNA evidence. The result is that jurors aren't convinced even by the kind of eyewitness testimony that used to nail down convictions. In one recent case, an 11-year-old girl pointed at the defendant and said, "That's the man who shot my father." The jurors found him not guilty. One explained, "I would have liked to see some evidence, like finding the gun with fingerprints.

U.S.S. community relations

The Navy is currently conducting an exercise called "Summer Pulse '04" in which, according to the AP, the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk and six more carriers, with a retinue of 120 other ships, will be deployed around the globe "to demonstrate America's ability to deal with ... the outbreak of violence just about everywhere at one time."

Does this make sense? How much will it cost? And what will be its effect on the morale of the crews? We've been told repeatedly that the Navy's been stretched too thin by its duties in support of military actions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, with sailors and their families complaining about long separations from home and talking about not reenlisting. There is plenty of real work for these people to do. The last thing they need is a phony public-relations exercise that just might succeed in supplying more targets for the terrorists.

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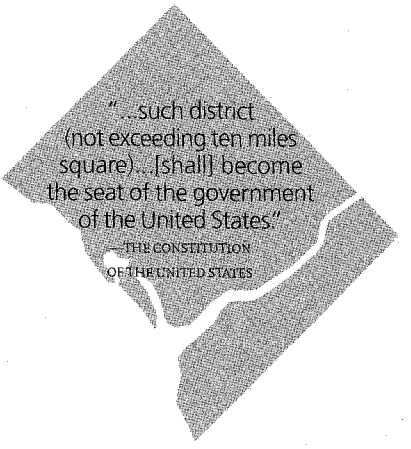

Rebels in Izods

Why Virginia is tilting toward Kerry

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

The strangest thing about states is that they actually have characteristics. Start on the bank of a river, sweep down over thousands of square miles of American turf, farms, suburbs, and cities, and stop at a line of longitude; it's not exactly a likely method for creating a unique culture. And yet somehow, again and again, it does. Vermont is only split from New Hampshire by a skinny river and a line slapped on a map, but its culture is completely distinct, organic spinach versus the Old Man of the Mountain. Residents of Massachusetts think Rhode Islanders are parochial, and Iowans think Kansans are hopeless hicks. And people who move to Virginia from neighboring North Carolina or West Virginia believe that they have traded up in the world, to a state that's more prosperous and classy, the heart of the Southern establishment.

It is this cultural difference that explains one of the mysteries of the current presidential race: John Kerry, the Massachusetts Yankee, is doing rather well here. He launched his campaign at Norfolk Naval base with an aircraft carrier in the background, and went on to crush Sen. John Edwards, a native from North Carolina, in the state's March primary. Most observers had thought that if Kerry stood any chance in the South, it would be in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana—the states which Clinton won and Gore came closest to taking. But soon after he became his party's presumptive nominee, a strange pattern kept popping up in the polls: In Virginia, not considered a swing-state, Kerry stayed close behind President Bush. State Republicans called it a mere blip, complained that the race was still young, and grumbled when local papers called them up to ask whether Bush might lose the state come November. Political scientists and pollsters mostly agreed that a Virginia win would be a long-shot for the man from Massachusetts. But by the eve of the Democratic convention in late July, Kerry and Bush were in a statistical dead-heat, and while Kerry's campaign chose to pull its Television advertising from Louisiana and Arkansas, it kept buying ads in Virginia. Six months ago, Larry Sabato, the esteemed University of Virginia political scientist, told reporters that Kerry was a dead duck in the state. Now, he tells me, Virginia is still Bush's to lose—but Bush may very well lose it.

A win for Kerry in Virginia, or even a competitive finish here, would qualify as fairly stunning political news. Virginia is commonly thought of as the seat of the South, a place of countless shrines to Confederate warriors, the home of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and the Bush-Cheney '04 campaign headquarters. Virginia did not go for either Clin-

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Kerry campaigns in Norfolk, Va. The Massachusetts blue blood has polled surprisingly well in this gentile Southern state. Getty Images

ton or Carter, both Southern Dems. In fact, it hasn't voted for any Democratic presidential candidate since 1964 and has long been the most reliably Republican state in the South.

But drive around Virginia, like I did early last month, and you realize pretty quickly that those same qualities that distinguish the Old Dominion from the rest of the South also help explain the surprising buoyancy of Kerry's candidacy. Put simply, Virginia is the Massachusetts of the South. Both states pride themselves on the lead roles they played in the nation's founding. Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, and Monticello are as revered locally as are Plymouth Rock, Old North Church, and Bunker Hill. Both states have long maritime traditions and booming high-tech suburbs. Both have cultures that admire good government, revere brave public service, trust leading families to run things, and generally eschew ideological zealotry and radicalism.

All these attributes can be seen in the kind of individuals who win statewide office in both places. Virginia's senior U.S. senator, John Warner, is a GOP version of Kerry: well-born, courtly, hardworking, a party man but with an independent streak, and a decorated Navy veteran. Warner refused to endorse Oliver North, the Republican candidate for the state's other Senate seat in 1994 because North was too radically conservative. And Virginia's current governor Mark Warner, is a Democratic version of Massachusetts' GOP governor Mitt Romney: competent, ideologically moderate, and a successful business entrepreneur. This centrist Chamber of Commerce sensibility, which helped make Virginia reliably Republican long before the less genteel parts of the South, is what's now helping shift the state towards Kerry's column this fall.

Giraffes & Presbyterians

If there is a center of the establishment in this establishmentarian commonwealth, it very well may be the Second Presbyterian Church in downtown Richmond, the state capitol. On a recent furnace-hot Sunday morning, the church looked like I imagine it must have during the 1950s: pinched, wealthy white faces in seersucker and bright, flowered dresses, an earnest, well-meaning sermon about the Rich Fool, the little blond kids scampering around, frequently censored. The whole thing looked like a Ralph Lauren catalogue.

After services in the church's dainty library, I met Hugh Gouldthorpe, an energetic, red-faced man in his 50s with a fringe of curly, mildly eccentric hair, a senior vice president at Owens & Minor, the nation's largest medical supply company. "Whatever the equivalent of a yellow-dog Democrat is, where you vote for the Republican Party just every

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time, that's what I am," he told me. He laughs a lot. Hugh has published a pair of management books, *I've Always Looked up to Giraffes* and *How to Feed Giraffes*, about how to develop talented managers "who rise above the crowd," and he is wearing an orange silk tie with giraffe patterns on it and a giraffe pin in his lapel. (You imagine the church's missionaries in Malawi, stopping off at the game preserve's gift-shop, catching sight of some giraffe tchotchkes and thinking, "Oh my, this would be perfect for Hugh!"). Hugh hasn't made up his mind yet about who to vote for in November, but, he says, this is the first time ever that he might go either way. The problem, for this man who describes himself as an "all-around civic leader," is Kerry seems the more leaderly candidate.

"When Bush came in, the business community thought they could trust him, they thought it would be like Reagan, a real leader," Hugh said. "But this hasn't been that kind of leadership." Everywhere you go in Richmond, and elsewhere in Virginia, you hear hints of similar, parallel shifts. Don Owens, a tax attorney, is voting for the Democratic presidential candidate for the first time in his life because Bush has been "untrustworthy," and because of the deficits. Ken Powell, an investment banker, says his whole firm, ever-Republican, is wavering, a change he calls monumental: "They look at the deficits and health care and education problems and, for the first time, they're not sure the Republicans are going to hand over a better country to their children."

A win for Kerry in Virginia, or even a competitive finish here, would qualify as fairly stunning political news.

Democrats are pushing that case in Loudoun County, the seat of Virginia's 10th congressional district, on the expanding western edge of the Washington suburbs. It is a jaw-dropping wealthy territory, horse country that has long been overwhelmingly Republican, but the outward push of migrants from the city and the vast, high-tech campuses that have grown up around Dulles airport have changed the cultural composition: The district gave Gore 46 percent of the vote in 2000, more than those given a Democrat in recent memory. The slow erosion of GOP support in exurban neighborhoods is happening all over the country, including south of the Mason-Dixon line. But nowhere else in the South is this phenomenon more likely to have electoral consequences than in Virginia.

The wrong blue blood

This year, for the first time in four election cycles, the long-serving Republican incumbent, Frank Wolf, has a Democratic challenger, a Harvard-trained, 37-year-old former investment banker named James Socas. The candidate has a laid-back, boosterish, youth-soccer-coach demeanor and a snapshot-ready, three-children family; his wife is named Devereux. It's not that Socas looks as if he's stepped out of a Norman Rockwell painting; rather, he's updated it for the 21st-century suburbs. He speaks with passion about religion and deficits, his eyebrows curving darkly downward whenever he mentions budget imbalances; had he run 15 years ago, he would have been a solid Main Street Republican. But that breed barely exists anymore, and Socas is trying to woo people like him—Christian-inflected, deficit-hawk businessmen—over to the Democrats. His campaign headquarters are in the basement of his gorgeous, sprawling, must-be-$3 million home, and so in order to get to the phone bank, the volunteers who show up early on Saturday morning have got to step over a wheelbarrow-sized basket teeming with dozens of shoes belonging to Socas's kids.

When we met in his living room, Socas had just returned from the national Democratic convention where he spoke at 4:13 p.m. on Wednesday: not that big an audience, but "my kids got to watch me on C-Span, which was nice." The case he made in Boston, and is repeating on the trail, Socas says, is a fairly simple one: "I don't have to ask voters to abandon the Republicans, I just have to explain how the Republicans have abandoned them, how they've decided to run to the right and their squandering the legacy we leave for our children."

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The same poor-stewardship case plays remarkably well in less tony parts of the state, such as the gritty strip-malled districts of Virginia Beach. This is Navy country, and the man organizing it is Michael Steven Myers, who grew up here as a barracks brat son of a Naval officer. Myers (who joined the Army) is the kind of red-state manly-man Vietnam vet who shows up in Country-and-Western songs; speaking with a stranger, he moves without warning from macho talk to an almost uncomfortable emotional intimacy, telling me vividly how two weeks ago in a park, he started weeping for his platoon sergeant who died in Vietnam. Once, half a generation ago, Myers ran for Congress as a libertarian-tinged independent in Idaho, black-helicopter country, he got precisely 18 votes. After his wife died two years ago, he moved back to his home state of Virginia and, after his first-ever registration as a Democrat, has now, improbably, immersed himself in the Kerry campaign. Late nights, he corners drunk old vets at fried-chicken joints and harangues them about what Bush has done to their benefits. He said he's converted a few: "There's a lot of guys who have told me, Mike, there's no way I'm going for your guy, but I can't vote for Bush." Then Myers is off on a long spiel about a play he's written about the horrors of combat. You quickly learn to tolerate these spells, wait for him to wind his way back to the wavering Republican voters. Eventually he does. "It's leadership," he told me. "That's the reason everyone here voted for Bush in 2000. Even the Republicans, they tell me they know they ain't getting it now."

Benjamin Wallace-Wells is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

Hired Hand

Meet the Democratic operative running the GOP convention.

By Greg Sargent

Not long ago, Kevin Sheekey opened up his copy of *National Journal*, an insider Beltway publication read mostly by lobbyists and Hill staffers, and spotted a little blurb about himself under the title "A Look at Five Key GOP Operatives." Sheekey does have a rather high-profile role in the coming fall campaign—as president of the New York City Host Committee, he's coordinating Mayor Michael Bloomberg's efforts to raise money and build a complex for the GOP convention, as well as to make sure that some 50,000 arriving Republicans and members of the international media are comfortable in New York. But Sheekey's name rarely pops up in the Beltway press. And so he proudly emailed a copy of the article to his wife, Robin.

She was unimpressed. "I'm sending this to my lawyer," she told him.

"I think she's putting it in the 'if we get divorced' file," Sheekey muses. "It's definitely going to be an exhibit for the prosecution."

Sheekey's wife, you see, is a committed Democrat. But she isn't the only one who wonders why her husband is working so hard on behalf of the Republican Party—because Sheekey is a Democrat, too. A cheerful, fast-talking, 38-year-old, Sheekey made his political bones as chief of staff to the late senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. But in 1997, he left the Hill to become a lobbyist for Bloomberg L.L.P, and soon became one of CEO Bloomberg's most trusted political advisers. When Bloomberg entered the New York mayor's race as a Republican and won, Sheekey became his liaison to the national GOP; when Bloomberg successfully lured the Republican convention to New York, he put Sheekey in charge. Now Sheekey—whose mother

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was for a decade the executive director for Common Cause, who had never worked (or voted) for a Republican in his life, who toiled in the Democratic trenches on the Hill for years, beginning in 1988 as a staffer for Queens congressman James Scheuer and going on to become a devotee of Moynihan—is devoting his days to making sure the GOP's quadrennial gathering is a smashing success.

Small wonder, then, that not a few D.C. Republicans who knew a thing or two about Sheekey's resume and political leanings grumbled over Bloomberg's choice, including Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie, who called Bloomberg directly to complain. The GOP leadership wanted a partisan Republican in the role, Gillespie told Bloomberg. The mayor stood firm. Sheekey was his choice.

Gillespie backed off, and it's a good thing for the GOP that he did. Sheekey may not be prepared to endorse Bush for reelection—"I'm voting for the candidate who's best for New York," is all he'll say on the matter—but he's going to great lengths to make sure the president's party gets a warm welcome. Sheekey has organized a whole series of events around the city for delegates—discount shopping at Madison Avenue boutiques, visits to Ellis Island, a barbecue with the New York Mets. But his masterstroke was to dream up the idea of housing the 15,000 journalists attending the convention inside the 1.3 million-square-foot James A. Farley Building. The 1914 structure in the classical style, which boasts 20 enormous Corinthian columns, used to house New York's central post office and sits just across Eighth Avenue from the Garden. Sheekey also came up with the scheme of connecting the two buildings by constructing an enclosed bridge over the avenue—a project some reporters have dubbed the "Sheekey Bridge."

In essence, Sheekey has created an enormous, self-contained village—complete with restaurants, roving food carts, espresso mach-ines, and even a spa—in the heart of midtown Manhattan. The bridge will allow Republicans and members of the press to pass back and forth between the media center and the convention hall in the Garden without tying up traffic on Eighth Avenue, dispensing with a potential logistical nightmare. What's more, visitors will be able to shuttle from one side to the other to eat, sip espresso, get a shave, even enjoy a pedicure, without ever setting foot in, or even catching a glimpse of, the city outside, much less the protesters sealed off blocks away.

The creation of this insulated universe—which all but guarantees a warm reception—was immensely important to the GOP. As Bill Harris, the convention CEO and chief planner, once told a reporter, the Republicans might not have come to New York if Sheekey hadn't come up with the idea of connecting the media center to the Garden via an enclosed bridge.

On a recent morning, Sheekey took me on a tour of the complex. A slim, boyish, shaggy-haired operative, Sheekey tends to get very enthusiastic about his creation, and when he gets excited, it's a bit like listening to Alvin the Chipmunk on amphetamines. "Shoeshines. Hot shaves. Massage," he exulted, as we stood in an empty room in the Farley Building—a "loft-like lounge space" in Sheekey parlance—that Barney's is planning to turn into a spa for stressed and sweaty reporters. "We're gonna have bathroom attendants!" Sheekey practically yelled as he threw open the door to a restroom and swung an arm towards a row of urinals. Then we hurried through the unfinished bridge, across a floor of exposed plywood. "Look at this. You're walking across Eighth Avenue—and you don't even know it!" He briefly turns pensive. "What kind of carpeting should we put down? I'm leaning towards the blue. But I'm thinking grey or red, too!"

There was more: Sheekey wanted to take me for a ride around the Farley building in, of all things, an electric car. A fleet of 20 such vehicles will carry dignitaries around the convention. Within moments, we were zipping around the complex, with Sheekey at the wheel. Who, I asked, will enjoy the luxury of being chaffeured around the event? "Members of the media," he rejoined. "You don't want Dan Rather's feet to touch the ground while he's here, do you?" We sailed past a garage-like door. "You see all the things we've got? This is the largest loading dock in Manhattan. You can pull 18-wheelers right in. Just pull them right in!" The car zigzagged rapidly around a pillar. "We could get hurt doing this, couldn't we?" he shouted into the wind.

Sheekey could indeed get hurt doing this—or, at least, his boss could. Besides working to make sure the convention helps Bush, he's also been working to make sure it doesn't hurt Bloomberg,

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who next year will be running for reelection in a city that has become a bastion of Bush-hatred. The disjuncture between Bloomberg's moderate, Northeastern brand of newfound Republicanism and the conservative, mostly Southern Republicans who actually run the party has in many respects been the central story of Bloomberg's mayoralty, and Sheekey, who has the somewhat mysterious title of "special adviser" to the mayor, has spent the last few years engaged in the challenging task of bridging the gap.

Sheekey hasn't always been successful. During the first half of Bloomberg's tenure, the mayor donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the GOP's coffers and placed his extensive fundraising Rolodex at the party's disposal. But Republican leaders in Washington screwed New York on issue after issue, from homeland-security formulas that shortchange the city to federal budget cuts that are stalling the city's efforts to battle everything from homelessness to AIDS. When Republican leaders finally announced last year that they would bring their convention to New York, Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) floated a plan to house GOP delegates on a cruise ship in New York Harbor, a decision that would have deprived the city's hospitality industry of millions of dollars in revenue. All these things have made it look as if Bloomberg's newly minted GOP credentials had failed to get the GOP leadership in D.C. to look kindly on the city—a serious embarrassment for the mayor.

With Bloomberg vulnerable on that front, Sheekey's political challenge has been to put a patina of nonpartisanship on what is, in fact, the definition of a partisan event. Pulling together a cast of New York business leaders to raise $64 million to fund the convention, Sheekey took care to showcase the involvement of the prominent Democrats among them, including hotel magnate Jonathan Tisch and real estate scion Bill Rudin. Several months ago, Sheekey had Bloomberg call on former mayor Ed Koch, a Democrat, and persuade him to cut ads telling New Yorkers to "make nice" during convention week.

"There isn't a difference between this event and a Democratic event," says Sheekey. "It's great for the city."

Such talk, of course, may be a bit less than reassuring to New Yorkers when the GOP actually arrives this month. Which is why Bloomberg's biggest challenge—and Sheekey's—is yet to come: the speech the mayor's slated to deliver on the convention's opening night. He'll need to extend a warm welcome to Republicans without extending too much praise; to hail the GOP's arrival, but merely as a sign of New York City's post-9/11 resurgence. Before an audience of millions, he'll have to distance himself from the national GOP with a scrupulously nonpartisan message—from the same stage on which Bush will defend his record and campaign for a second turn. It very well may prove the most delicate and important political speech of the mayor's lifetime.

Sheekey, of course, is writing it. "What do you think his speech should say?" he asked me. "What should the theme be? Should we do a video? Should we call Spielberg?" This time, at least, it's not clear whether he's joking.

Greg Sargent is a contributing editor at *New York* magazine.

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Cheryl Phillips, Steve Miletich, and Ken Armstrong

"Airline Insecurity"

Seattle Times

July 11-13, 2004

In a comprehensive, sobering look at the Transportation Security Administration's handling of airline security, the *Seattle Times* found that luggage routinely goes unscreened, and even when it is, the screening equipment is often so poor that workers can't even decipher the results. Most of the agency's front-line workers are overworked, and morale is low. Instead of addressing these problems, the *Times* charges, TSA's senior leadership has spent most of its time putting out public relations flyers and has yet to systematically review its airport security procedures.

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Spooks and Ladders

Critics say the CIA produces risk-averse careerists. Exhibit A: Porter Goss.

By Jessica North

Long before the United States invaded Iraq based on "slam dunk" intelligence that turned out to be wrong, critics complained of a culture of risk-averse careerism at the Central Intelligence Agency—including a tendency to slant analysis towards the predilections of whoever happens to be in the White House. Everything the public has learned about the CIA since 9/11—from its turf-conscious resistance to sharing data with other agencies to its willingness to drop doubts and caveats from its public estimation of Saddam's WMD capabilities—confirms that the agency's bureaucratic culture needs a major overhaul.

For a while, it looked like the person in Washington best equipped to force such change was Rep. Porter Goss (R-Fla.), one of only two members of Congress with career experience in intelligence (he was a CIA case officer in the 1960s). As chair of the House Intelligence Committee, Goss had the institutional power needed to hold hearings, compel answers, and reshape policy. Known as a pragmatist, he had the trust of Democratic members for working in a bipartisan, independent manner. And he had a partner for reform in Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.), the committee's centrist, pro-defense ranking minority member. While tough questions or aggressive investigations might have discomfited his party's leadership, there was strong reason to believe that Porter Goss would demonstrate the courage to put national security above party politics.

Alas, future history books are not likely to cast Goss as a hero of the post-9/11 drama. Over the last year, Goss has failed to be much of a force for intelligence oversight. These days, if there's fresh thinking about intelligence reform or a penetrating hearing taking place, you can be sure that it's not happening at the House Intelligence Committee. While the Senate Intelligence Committee, chaired by staunchly conservative Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), managed to produce a bipartisan report on Iraq intelligence widely praised even among those who thought it could have gone further, Goss's committee has been practically somnambulant. Instead, the House chairman has alienated his colleagues across the aisle and become one of the Hill's most reliable conduits for the White House line of the day.

Despite, or rather because of, this record, Goss was nominated by President Bush last month to be CIA director. The congressman had known he was on the White House's short list for the post, and coyly hinted interest in it, long before George Tenet resigned in June. And he has acted accordingly, running interference for the Bush administration, forestalling the sorts of inquiries, and ducking the kinds of questions that might reflect negatively on the president's national security record during an election year. In other words, he's become exactly the kind of operator that plagues our intelligence apparatus: a career-obsessed bureaucrat prone to indulging the White House even at the expense of the national interest. You can take the spook out of the CIA, it turns out. But you can't take the CIA out of the spook.

The man with the golden resume

After graduating from Yale in 1960, Goss served as a military intelligence officer for two years, after which he joined the CIA. A case officer for eight years, Goss left the agency for health reasons in 1971. A year later, he and two CIA friends founded a weekly paper in Sanibel Island, Fla., which they eventually sold, turning a handsome profit. At about that time, Goss became politically active, joining a local "slow growth" effort near his home. In 1974, Goss was elected mayor of the island. Goss's growing involvement in coastal South Florida's debates over development gave him the platform he needed to run for Congress, and he remained active on environmental issues after winning his House seat in 1988. With the exception of his fight against expanding oil and gas development in the Gulf Coast, Goss hewed largely to GOP party line once in the House. Still, he quickly won praise for his leadership, his expertise, and, occasionally, his independence after he became chairman of the House Intelligence Committee in 1997.

In early 2002 in the aftermath of 9/11, Goss and Bob Graham (D-Fla.), then chairman of Senate Intelligence Committee, came together to start a joint inquiry, looking only at performance of the intelligence agencies prior to September 11 rather than more explosive questions about White House policy itself. But congressional Republicans beat back an attempt by Democrats to establish an independent commission, arguing that it would be an exercise in political finger pointing. Goss also first opposed the commission, then offered an unsuccessful compromise measure. But as momentum to charter the independent commission picked up in Congress in the fall of 2002, Goss finally signed on—despite what one congressional official describes as "intense pressure"

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from Dick Cheney himself.

Goss and Graham concluded their joint congressional probe in December 2002, but ran into the CIA's insistence that the report be kept under wraps—even when the information had been made public in hearings or in the press. In fact, the CIA at first cleared only 20 percent of the report. The two chairmen then began an arduous, seven-month long negotiation with Langley before the two sides concluded the vetting. Although a good 20 percent of the report remained redacted at the end, there was widespread agreement in both parties that it would have been much worse without congressional pressure, especially from Porter Goss.

The release of the joint inquiry report was Goss's last major bipartisan effort. Last summer, as it was becoming clear that the White House wanted Tenet out, and Goss's name was being floated to replace him, the House and Senate intelligence panels began closed-door probes into the Iraq WMD mystery—specifically, where and how U.S. intelligence had gone wrong before the war. Goss quickly indicated he was not going to stray from the White House line on Iraq, despite the widening disconnect between administration prewar claims and the reality on the ground. Brushing aside a query about questionable statements by administration officials, Goss scoffed: "If you're asking me about editing, go to editors someplace else . . . We don't do editing in our committee."

Several months later, when weapons inspector David Kay came back with a preliminary report about his scant findings, Goss took a more bizarre tangent, implying not just an Iraq-September 11 connection, but that WMD was used in the attacks as well. "Until we find Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, I'm going to assume they will use it again like what they did on September 11," huffed Goss. He also cited Iraq's "continuing atrocities in chemical and biological warfare"—in direct contradiction to Kay's own statements that those active WMD programs had ended years earlier.

As the Bush administration's case for the Iraq war continued to crumble, Goss continued to come to the White House's defense, often using his perch as vice chairman of the Rules Committee to kill Democratic amendments and shut down debate. Last winter, he refused to allow an open intelligence committee hearing on whether it should call upon the White House to release all materials related to its investigation of the leak of CIA covert WMD operative Valerie Plame's name—after promising Democrats that he would. Though knowingly outing a covert agent is a crime (and a danger to the country), and Goss himself had been a CIA agent, he nevertheless argued (without having investigated the matter) that there wasn't enough evidence of willful misconduct on the part of the White House to merit an investigation. "Somebody sends me a blue dress and some DNA, I'll have an investigation," the chairman sniffed.

In April 2004, Harman and other Democrats introduced a bill that advocated the creation of an intelligence czar—not unlike the September 11 commission's proposal for a National Intelligence Director. Goss sat on the bill for weeks before introducing a GOP alternative for intelligence reform. That bill would beef up the CIA director's own powers rather than create a separate position above the intelligence agencies: Democrats pointed out the timing was probably not a coincidence, given Goss's openly-expressed ambition for the director's job.

In June of this year, when the intelligence authorization bill came to the House floor, Goss led the Republican effort to kill every Democratic amendment to boost counter-terrorism spending. He led similar GOP efforts to kill Democratic amendments to get the committee to investigate the role of intelligence officers in the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal.

The degree to which Goss has squandered his tenure as chairmanship is nowhere more obvious than in the committee's sorry record of investigating the intelligence that led to the invasion of Iraq. In July, the Senate Intelligence Committee came out with a detailed report on prewar intelligence failures that managed to win unanimous approval by its members. The Senate panel's leaders, Roberts and West Virginia Democrat John D. Rockefeller, even managed to secure a compromise earlier in the year that will expand its Iraq probe this fall into more explosive issues about the political "use" of intelligence. While the agreement fell short of what many Democrats wanted, the Senate panel is at least working on the issue. Sen. Roberts, a loyal Republican, made the stunning admission recently that the Iraq war "would have been a lot different"—more like the Bosnian and Kosovo campaigns—if Congress knew in 2002 what it knows now. Meanwhile, Goss's Iraq probe has virtually ground to a halt. Tensions within the once-bipartisan panel are so bad that the two sides are barely speaking.

These days, Goss is fond of laying the bulk of the blame for recent intelligence failures on the Clinton administration, specifically for starving the intelligence budget and failing to anticipate the al Qaeda threat. But Goss fails to mention that House Republicans, including Goss, backed a 6-percent cut in the intelligence budget in 1993 and subsequently passed all of Clinton's intelligence budgets throughout the 1990s without once calling for a boost in funding or enhanced counter-terrorism efforts. Goss has been virulent in his attacks on Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, accusing him of voting to cut intelligence budgets. Goss fails to mention that in 1996, he was among the cosigners of a commission report that called for more staff cuts in the intelligence agencies, arguing that intelligence spending was still 80 percent above 1980 levels. House Republicans, including Goss, did increase Clinton's intelligence budget request in 1999—but only by 1 percent.

The Democrats have criticized the choice of Goss for CIA director on the grounds that he is too political. That's a fair criticism, but an overly broad one. The more important point is that Goss is willing to tailor his investigations and twist his analysis in a way that avoids inconvenient truths and pleases his political masters while advancing his own career. This is precisely the kind of "political" behavior that leaders of the CIA have too often exhibited—and that has repeatedly contributed to our disastrous intelligence failures in recent years. It may once have been possible to think that Porter Goss was just the man to bring out the best in the CIA. He now looks to be someone who will defend the worst. ◆

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Follow the Money

How John Kerry busted the terrorists' favorite bank.

By David Sirota and Jonathan Baskin

Two decades ago, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) was a highly respected financial titan. In 1987, when its subsidiary helped finance a deal involving Texas oilman George W. Bush, the bank appeared to be a reputable institution, with attractive branch offices, a traveler's check business, and a solid reputation for financing international trade. It had high-powered allies in Washington and boasted relationships with respected figures around the world.

All that changed in early 1988, when John Kerry, then a young senator from Massachusetts, decided to probe the finances of Latin American drug cartels. Over the next three years, Kerry fought against intense opposition from vested interests at home and abroad, from senior members of his own party; and from the Reagan and Bush administrations, none of whom were eager to see him succeed.

By the end, Kerry had helped dismantle a massive criminal enterprise and exposed the infrastructure of BCCI and its affiliated institutions, a web that law enforcement officials today acknowledge would become a model for international terrorist financing. As Kerry's investigation revealed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, BCCI was interested in more than just enriching its clients—it had a fundamentally anti-Western mission. Among the stated goals of its Pakistani founder were to "fight the evil influence of the West," and finance Muslim terrorist organizations. In retrospect, Kerry's investigation had uncovered an institution at the fulcrum of America's first great post-Cold War security challenge.

More than a decade later, Kerry is his party's nominee for president, and terrorist financing is anything but a back-burner issue. The Bush campaign has settled on a new strategy for attacking Kerry: Portray him as a do-nothing senator who's weak on fighting terrorism. "After 19 years in the Senate, he's had thousands of votes, but few signature achievements," President Bush charged recently at a campaign rally in Pittsburgh; spin that's been echoed by Bush's surrogates, conservative pundits, and mainstream reporters alike, and by a steady barrage of campaign ads suggesting that the one thing Kerry did do in Congress was prove he knew nothing about terrorism. Ridiculing the senator for not mentioning al Qaeda in his 1997 book on terrorism, one ad asks: "How can John Kerry win a war [on terror] if he doesn't know the enemy?"

If that line of attack has been effective, it's partly because Kerry does not have a record like the chamber's dealmakers such as Sens. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) or Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). Though Kerry has been a key backer of bills on housing reform, immigration, and the environment, there are indeed few pieces of landmark legislation that owe their passage to Kerry.

But legislation is only one facet of a senator's record. As the BCCI investigation shows, Kerry developed a very different record of accomplishment—one often as vital, if not more so, than passage of bills. Kerry's probe didn't create any popular new governmental programs, reform the tax code, or eliminate bureaucratic waste and fraud. Instead, he shrewdly used the Senate's oversight powers to address the threat of terrorism well before it was in vogue, and dismantled a key terrorist weapon. In the process, observers saw a senator with tremendous fortitude, and a willingness to put the public good ahead of his own career. Those qualities might be hard to communicate to voters via one-line sound bites, but they would surely aid Kerry as president in his attempts to battle the threat of terrorism.

From drug lords to lobbyists

Despite having helmed the initial probe which led to the Iran-Contra investigation, Kerry was left off the

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elite Iran-Contra committee in 1987. As a consolation prize, the Democratic leadership in Congress made Kerry the chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations and told him to dig into the Contra-drug connection. Kerry turned to BCCI early in the second year of the probe when his investigators learned that Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega was laundering drug profits through the bank on behalf of the Medellin cartel.

By March 1988, Kerry's subcommittee had obtained permission from the Foreign Relations Committee to seek subpoenas for both BCCI and individuals at the bank involved in handling Noriega's assets, as well as those handling the accounts of others in Panama and Colombia. Very quickly, though, Kerry faced a roadblock. Citing concerns that the senator's requests would interfere with an ongoing sting operation in Tampa, the Justice Department delayed the subpoenas until 1988, at which point the subcommittee's mandate was running out.

Legislation is only one facet of a senator's record. An investigation of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International that Sen. Kerry launched over a decade ago uncovered a massive criminal enterprise that became a model for international terrorist financing.

BCCI, meanwhile, had its own connections. Prominent figures with ties to the bank included former president Jimmy Carter's budget director, Bert Lance, and a bevy of powerful Washington lobbyists with close ties to President George H.W. Bush, a web of influence that may have helped the bank evade previous investigations. In 1985 and 1986, for instance, the Reagan administration launched no investigation even after the CIA had sent reports to the Treasury, Commerce, and State Departments bluntly describing the bank's role in drug-money laundering and other illegal activities.

In the spring of 1989, Kerry hit another obstacle. Foreign Relations Committee chairman Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), under pressure from both parties, formally asked Kerry to end his probe. Worried the information he had collected would languish, Kerry quickly dispatched investigator Jack Blum to present the information his committee had found about BCCI's money-laundering operations to the Justice Department. But according to Blum, the Justice Department failed to follow up.

The young senator from Massachusetts, thus, faced a difficult choice. Kerry could play ball with the establishment and back away from BCCI, or he could stay focused on the public interest and gamble his political reputation by pushing forward.

BCCI and the bluebloods

Kerry opted in 1989 to take the same information that had been coldly received at the Justice Department and bring it to New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, who agreed to begin a criminal investigation of BCCI, based on Kerry's leads. Kerry also continued to keep up the public pressure. In 1990, when the Bush administration gave the bank a minor slap on the wrist for its money laundering practices, Kerry went on national television to slam the decision. "We send drug people to jail for the rest of their life," he said, "and these guys who are bankers in the corporate world seem to just walk away, and it's business as usual...When banks engage knowingly in the laundering of money, they should be shut down. It's that simple, it really is."

He would soon have a chance to turn his declarations into action. In early 1991, the Justice Department concluded its Tampa probe with a plea deal allowing BCCI officials to stay out of court. At the same time, news reports indicated that Washington elder statesman Clark Clifford might be indicted for defrauding bank regulators and helping BCCI maintain a shell in the United States.

Kerry pounced, demanding (and winning) authorization from the Foreign Relations Committee to open a broad investigation into the bank in May 1991. Almost immediately, the senator faced a new round of pressure to relent. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Democratic doyenne Pamela Harriman personally called Kerry to object, as did his fellow senators. "What are you doing to my friend Clark Clifford?," staffers recalled them asking, according to *The Washington Post*. BCCI itself hired an army of lawyers, PR specialists, and lobbyists, including former members of Congress, to thwart the investigation.

But Kerry refused to back off, and his hearings began to expose the ways in which international terrorism was financed. As Kerry's subcommittee discovered, BCCI catered to many of the most notorious tyrants and thugs of the late 20th century, including Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, the heads of the Medellin cocaine cartel, and Abu Nidal, the notorious Palestinian terrorist. According to the CIA, it also did business with those who went on to lead al Qaeda.

And BCCI went beyond merely offering financial assistance to dictators and terrorists: According to *Time*, the operation itself was an elaborate fraud, replete with a "global intelligence operation and a Mafia-like enforcement squad."

By July 1991, Kerry's work paid off. That month, British and U.S. regulators finally responded to the

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evidence provided by Kerry, Morgenthau, and a concurrent investigation by the Federal Reserve. BCCI was shut down in seven countries, restricted in dozens more, and served indictments for grand larceny, bribery, and money laundering. The actions effectively put it out of business what Morgenthau called, "one of the biggest criminal enterprises in world history."

Bin Laden's bankers

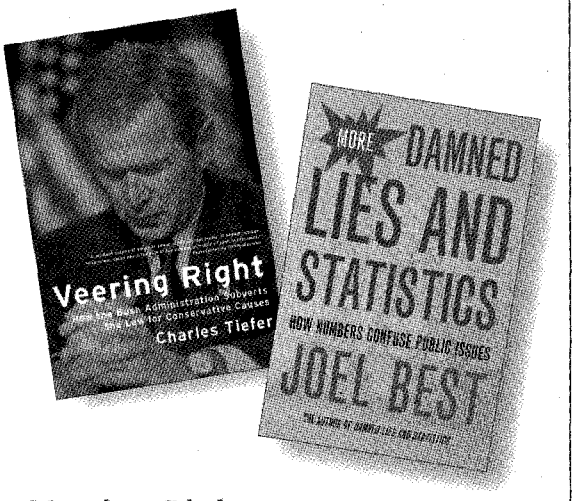
Kerry's record in the BCCI affair, of course, contrasts sharply with Bush's. The current president's career as an oilman was always marked by the kind of insider cronyism that Kerry resisted. Even more startling, as a director of Texas-based Harken Energy, Bush himself did business with BCCI-connected institutions almost at the same time Kerry was fighting the bank. As *The Wall Street Journal* reported in 1991, there was a "mosaic of BCCI connections surrounding [Harken] since George W. Bush came on board." In 1987, Bush secured a critical $25 million-loan from a bank the Kerry Commission would later reveal to be a BCCI joint venture. Certainly, Bush did not suspect BCCI had such questionable connections at the time. But still, the president's history suggests his attacks on Kerry's national-security credentials come from a position of little authority.

As the presidential campaign enters its final stretch, Kerry's BCCI experience is important for two reasons. First, it reveals Kerry's foresight in fighting terrorism that is critical for any president in this age of asymmetrical threats. As *The Washington Post* noted, "years before money laundering became a centerpiece of antiterrorist efforts...Kerry crusaded for controls on global money laundering in the name of national security."

Make no mistake about it, BCCI would have been a player. A decade after Kerry helped shut the bank down, the CIA discovered Osama bin Laden was among those with accounts at the bank. A French intelligence report obtained by *The Washington Post* in 2002 identified dozens of companies and individuals who were involved with BCCI and were found to be dealing with bin Laden after the bank collapsed, and that the financial network operated by bin Laden today "is similar to the network put in place in the 1980s by BCCI." As one senior U.S. investigator said in 2002, "BCCI was the mother and father of terrorist financing operations."

Second, the BCCI affair showed Kerry to be a politician driven by a sense of mission, rather than expediency—even when it meant ruffling feathers. Perhaps Sen. Hank Brown, the ranking Republican on Kerry's subcommittee, put it best. "John Kerry was willing to spearhead this difficult investigation," Brown said. "Because many important members of his own party were involved in this scandal, it was a distasteful subject for other committee and subcommittee chairmen to investigate. They did not. John Kerry did." ◆

SUBVERSION & LIES



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Dream Deferred

The most inspired caseworker in America's most lauded welfare agency can barely do his job.

By Jason DeParle

"Mi-ike!" she rasped. She stood so close it was all he could do to keep from backing away. She talked with such a loud lisp he thought she might be retarded. She was missing half her teeth, and her skin looked almost plastic. If she weren't so big in the butt, he would have guessed she was smoking crack. That's the thing he had noticed about addicts: Their butts were the first thing to go. As her sandpaper voice silenced the room, even the receptionists stopped to stare. "I need a coat, Mi-ike! You're my caseworker now, Mi-ike!" Michael Steinborn felt his loathing for his job surge to new highs. "She's a mile a minute with the 'Mikes,'" he thought. "My new best friend."

Since inheriting her case months earlier, he had known her only as a computer code. She hadn't answered his appointment letters. (Typical.) She hadn't complained when he docked her check. (Not typical.) Now here she was in shirtsleeves in January, with the wind-chill factor 24 below. Coats weren't part of Michael's job on the front lines of Milwaukee's famous welfare experiment. That's what the office had its high-priced "community outreach" team for. But given days to produce, the outreach team had produced only excuses. "They haven't gotten you a coat?" he asked. "Look at me, Mi-ike—does it look like I have a coat?" There was a thrift shop down the street. Michael promised her a coat. He was halfway out the door when he spotted the hole in the scheme: He only had $4. He climbed back up the stairs, bummed a loan from a coworker, and ran four blocks through the snow. The drifts swallowed his office-worker shoes and buried his toes in ice.

The thrift store was out of coats. There was another thrift store two blocks away, and another sprint left him surrounded by coats—blue coats and black coats, long coats and short coats, so many coats that he was losing his way when a voice came into his head. It was the familiar voice of self-reproach, his You Idiot! voice, and it reminded him that he wasn't there to make a fashion statement: just pick one, you idiot! He chose a blue ski jacket with a pink collar, nicer than anything he had expected. It cost $11. He had $9. The clerk made a show of contempt, but let the difference slide. It wasn't exactly a landmark in the annals of social work. But Michael allowed himself a *frisson* of satisfaction. The nail filers in outreach had sat around all week; Michael Steinborn, can-do guy, had gotten something done.

She lifted her arms over her head and made a sour face. "It's a little snug when I do this, Mi-ike!" The slapstick line came to mind: "Then don't do this!" But the coat had another problem. The zipper didn't work. Back he went, six blocks through the snow. Back to the sign that warned: "No Exchanges. All Sales Final." What was he supposed to say? Special exceptions for dumb-ass social workers with ice in their shoes? A bit of groveling brought a lined denim jacket and a zipper that zipped. "Mi-ike!" she said. "The other one was better looking than this!"

Mi-ike wasn't going back out in the cold. Mi-ike wasn't wearing a coat himself. He left his at home because his clients' kids kept wiping their Cheeto hands on it. Mi-ike was done talking about coats. "Okay, Mi-ike," she said. How about a bus pass? Four days later, in shirtsleeves again, she told Michael's supervisor that no one would help her find a coat.

A social worker! Michael Steinborn couldn't believe he was a social worker! Six months earlier, he was an unemployed jack of the building trades, drinking vodka for breakfast and

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Jason DeParle, a former *Washington Monthly* editor, is a reporter for *The New York Times*. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare*, to be published this month by Viking, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. Copyright Jason DeParle, 2004. For more, see www.jasondeparle.com.

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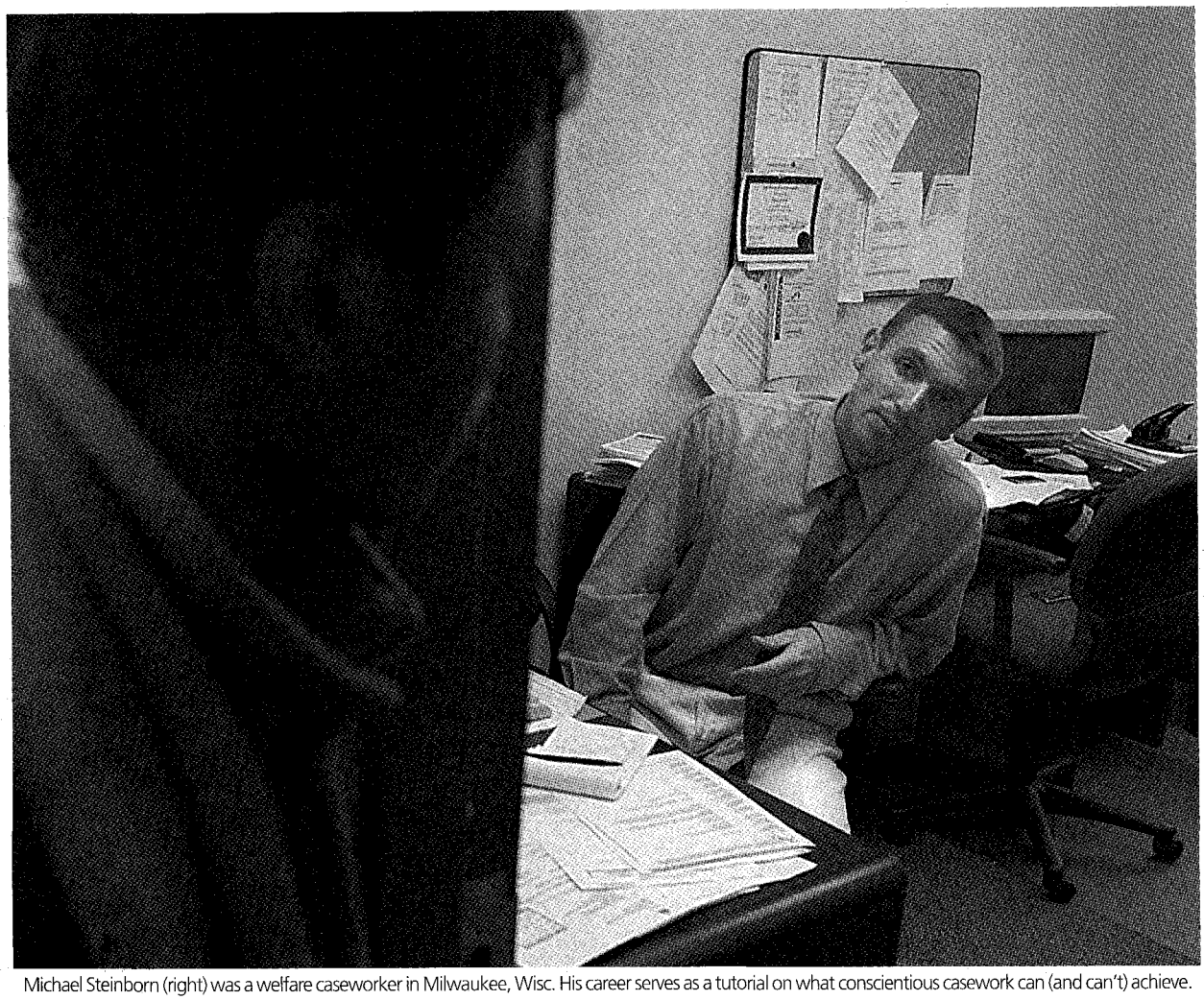

Michael Steinborn (right) was a welfare caseworker in Milwaukee, Wisc. His career serves as a tutorial on what conscientious casework can (and can't) achieve.

Photo/Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

wondering how he and his pregnant girlfriend were going to get by. Now he was a caseworker—er, "Financial and Employment Planner"—offering indigents career advice. He hated the grip of starched collars on his throat. He hated the office's new-carpet smell. Above all, he hated feeling responsible once again for the fiascos of ghetto life. Raised in the central city, the son of a small-time landlord, Michael had patrolled the ghetto since grade school, when his father first dispatched him to help collect the rents. "Son, take it from me," Ted Steinborn had warned, after another tenant had skipped out on a debt. "They'll take and take, and then they'll spit you out." Michael took pride in never ducking a fight and had his nose broken three times. The last thing he brought to his profession was a sentimental view of the poor. "I never wanted to be a sucker for a sob story," he said.

Yet as a caseworker, Michael was surrounded by sob stories, and like his father he believed some of them. He could carry on about his clients' bad-faith betrayals, but sometimes he felt he was lying, too, talking up the promise in their going-nowhere jobs. "People will call and say, 'I got a job!' I feel like saying, 'You're going to have a really fucked-up time living on $6.41 an hour.' But my job is to bullshit them, to say, 'Hey, that's great, it's a first step.'" Clients liked Michael. Clients trusted Michael. To an extent rare among the city's 150 caseworkers, Michael's career served as a tutorial on what conscientious casework can (and can't) achieve.

The 1996 welfare bill, a landmark in social policy now up for renewal before Congress, has been widely deemed a success. And on one level, the praise is deserved. After 60 years of federal control, Congress handed new authority back to the states, with fixed funding, work rules, and time limits of no more than five years for most recipients. The states responded by cutting the rolls and raising employment rates, each dramatically. Poverty plunged for its target populations—children, minorities, and single mothers. The late '90s economic boom gets part of the credit, and so does an unsung expansion of workers' aid, including child care, health care, and tax credits. But the timing and the depth of the employment surge puts the welfare law at the center of the trend.

If the welfare law has worked, however, it has largely worked as a deterrent, creating enough hassles that those with other options make other plans. Some states require a month-long job search before applicants can collect benefits. Some, including Wisconsin, route recipients through rounds of job-search and motivation classes so tedious they make the competent flee. It is much less common for the system to do what it often claims, to provide individualized services that get at the underlying issues in poor women's lives, like drug abuse or depression. With the rolls down 60 percent, there has been lots of talk about the "hard to serve" cases that remain, with-

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out much serving of them.

In part, that's because poor women themselves are resistant to the idea. "Personalized casework" means a stranger dipping into their business. In part, it's because lots of frontline workers, particularly in the big cities, aren't a whole lot more capable than their clients. Some, good and bad, have just come off the welfare rolls, and I've met more than one caseworker who returned to public aid. Even good ones like Michael often find themselves trapped in unsupportive bureaucracies. Some of the lawmakers reconsidering the law have now recognized that the bureaucracy needs to do more. But their solution—demanding that states ratchet up the number of clients routed through the current programs—ignores the quality of the programs themselves.

I spent seven years following a group of families through Wisconsin Works, or "W-2," the most lauded welfare program in the country and one now being emulated as far away as Israel. With generous funding, small caseloads, and the clout of the state's four-term governor, Tommy G. Thompson, W-2 is often thought of as a best-case look at the welfare bureaucracy. It wasn't a reassuring one. Behind the scenes, the celebrated program compiled a disturbing and largely hidden record of financial waste and human neglect. If the law is going to live up to its billing—"the greatest social policy change in sixty years," said Thompson, in his current job as Secretary of Health and Human Services—the system can't afford to rest on a record like this.

"Our dismal performance"

Some social-work careers begin in flights of youthful idealism; Michael's began in 1998 at Ladies Night at a Milwaukee pickup joint. He was out with a high school friend, Jose Arteaga. Growing up together in the inner city, they used to have long, philosophical talks about how the ghetto had gotten so screwed up. Now at 30, Michael was poor and screwed up himself, and Jose was a rising star—director of case management—at Maximus, Inc., one of the five private groups running the Milwaukee welfare program. Jose had an inspiration: Michael should come aboard as a caseworker. Yeah, Michael thought. Right.

It was late, and they were drinking, but they each had a reason to act like they were serious. Michael's reason was simple: He needed a job. In the decade since he had dropped out of Marquette University, he had driven a taxi, delivered pizzas, swabbed toilets, rushed into a marriage, had a son, and gone through a bitter divorce. He had started a landscaping business with a friend and gotten cut out just as it took off. In the two years since, Michael mostly had brooded and drank. He owed 10 months of back child support, and his girlfriend was due to give birth in a week. He needed some cash.

Jose's motives were more complex. Among the five Milwaukee agencies running W-2 (including the YWCA and Goodwill Industries), Maximus was the only national, for-profit company—a welfare agency that traded on the New York Stock Exchange! By allowing states to privatize their programs, the 1996 law set off a gold rush among such firms; one Wall Street analyst saw more than $2 billion a year up for grabs. Formidable rivals like EDS and Lockheed Martin, the aerospace giant, were fighting for the business, but with a longer record and tighter focus, Maximus was thought to have an edge. The W-2 contract was a coup. No welfare program was followed more closely, and Maximus hoped to leverage the publicity into market share nationwide. The company went public on the eve of W-2's launch, and the stake of the founder, David Mastran, soared to more than $100 million.

But behind the scenes, the Maximus program was soon in disarray. W-2 was built on the theory of "full engagement": 40 hours of weekly activity, of which 30 would involve actual work. Yet many clients waited months for assignments. Others ignored their assignments and got paid anyway. Six months after the program's start, Steve Perales, the second in charge, warned that "virtually no referrals are being made to the CSJ unit," the one that assigns community service jobs. While 1,100 clients were supposed to have assignments, just 507 had gotten them, and "only about 88 are actually participating." That is, in the country's most famous work program, only 8 percent of the clients were working. "What they were doing, I don't know," George Leutermann, the head of the program, later told me. "They were doing nothing."

One reason was the shortage of caseworkers. Under state rules, each "Financial and Employment Planner," or Fep, was supposed to manage no more than 55 clients. Some Maximus Feps had more than twice as many. Ten months after the program's launch, the state took its first quantitative look at the agencies' performance. The audit, called a 740RC report, was of interest not only as a mid-term report card, but also because it hinted at the criteria the state would use for contract renewal the following year. With Maximus using the Milwaukee program as a national exhibit, a failure to keep the contract would wreck the business plan. All the Milwaukee agencies performed poorly on the report, but Maximus did especially badly: 67 percent of its clients had no work assignments. Railing about "our dismal performance," Leutermann wrote a memo blaming subordinates for "a major setback" that "portends continued problems." But after months of refusing, he also agreed to hire more caseworkers.

A few nights after their drinking session, Jose showed up in Michael's kitchen with a bottle of tequila and a sheaf of paper. Taping flowcharts to the wall until 1:00 a.m., he offered a crash-course on W-2, as it existed in theory.

Point Number One: Only Work Pays. Free money was gone. Clients had to earn their checks in a simulated workweek. The bulk should be spent actually working, while the rest could be devoted to activities like training, treatment, or classes. For every hour clients missed, their checks got reduced by $5.15, the equivalent of the minimum wage.

Point Number Two: W-2 Provides the Jobs. The jobs progressed along a four-part ladder, with each a step up in difficulty and pay. At the bottom rung, even the physically or mentally impaired might, say, perform light assembly tasks in a supervised setting. At the top was the ultimate goal: regular, unsubsidized employment. In between, most clients would be assigned to community service jobs—answering the phone at a food bank, perhaps, or sweeping a school. In

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addition, the state provided child care, health care, and transportation, the support services that workers needed.

Point Number Three: Casework Is the Key. There was no casework in the old system, just a stream of checks. W-2 promised every client an individualized employment plan and a caseworker to help see her through. Part sheriff, part shrink, the Feps were supposed to monitor progress and get to the bottom of things. "More of the success of Wisconsin Works will ride on the talents ... [of the] financial planners than on any other collective feature of the new design," the original W-2 proposal had said. Yet most of the front-line staff had been brought in from the old system. Jose thought too many acted like data-entry clerks, tidying their software screens but forgetting the client. He saw Michael as a no-bullshit guy, tough but empathetic. The kind the system needed.

As the kitchen course came to its inebriated close, Michael liked the theory. But as for his own role as an agent of reform, he had no enthusiasm at all. Office work dealt a blow to his muscular self-image. Office workers had soft hands. Still, the $28,000 salary was more than he had ever earned. Leaving for the first day of work, he kissed his baby goodbye. "Your daddy's going to make some money," he said.

The boss's mistress

It started poorly and went downhill from there. His first battles weren't with clients but with the computer system that tracked them, a befuddling Wisconsin institution called CARES. The central nervous system of W-2 (most states have an equivalent), CARES had more than 500 screens, each known by an opaque four-letter code. Need to change someone's work assignment? Go to WPAS. Issue her check? Type "Y" in AGEC, but change the date in SFED, otherwise the check may not go out, even when AGEC said it did. For all the talk of making Feps bold problem solvers, fluency in CARES was particularly prized since it was the sole repository of the data that would govern contract renewal. It didn't matter when Michael used his lunch hour to drive clients to job interviews; there was no CARES screen for that. (He pictured one: "SCKR," for "sucker.") What mattered was whether he had correctly coded their employability plans.

Facing a parade of addled clients, Michael found himself thinking more about keystrokes than the substance of what they said. His befuddlement reached its dark apogee with the arrival of a large, sobbing woman free-associating about her troubles. Michael dutifully posed the questions on his screen.

Sobbing Woman: I got into it with my sister's boyfriend....

Michael: What are your employment goals?

Woman: ... he hit me in the head with a two-by-four...

Michael: Foreign languages? Written or verbal?

Woman: ... we're out of food ...

Michael: Volunteer work or hobbies?

Volunteer work or hobbies! "No, I don't want to hear that you've been at food pantries for the last two months," he thought. "What I want to know is whether you play volleyball!" A coworker suggested the information might help him guide a client's job search, but Michael kept picturing a gnome darting out of the computer room: "A knitter! A knitter! We've got a knitter, folks!"

In pitching welfare privatization, Maximus had promised to outdo government with "a professional work environment that is more conducive to employee productivity." Michael thought the place was coming unglued. At least two caseworkers were addicted to crack. Another was hospitalized for job-related stress. A Fep with whom he shared an office went off on gambling jags, staying out at a casino all night, then sleeping at her desk. "Baby, I gotta take a little nap," she'd say, locking the door. He wondered if he were just a magnet for misfits, but the memo traffic in the bosses' suite showed a broader turmoil. Leutermann, the office chief, warned one caseworker was "going off the deep end lately," causing "all kinds of problems about his behavior in the bathroom." Another Maximus worker chased his supervisor from his office when she told him to clean up his files. "I am a Marine combat veteran that deals with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder," he wrote. "I lost my head." A flirtatious caseworker, rebuffed by a colleague, walked into his cubicle and bit him.

Given the power that caseworkers exert, welfare offices need to use caution; predatory workers may pressure their clients for sex or drugs. Sometimes no pressure is needed. "If you give me the chance, I'll ride you like a horse," one of Michael's clients wrote. Not everyone summoned his self-restraint. A workshop teacher was quietly pushed out the door after a client complained that he was urging her and others to join a drug-peddling scheme. An internal report explained: "She said some of these women have told her that they have had sex with him because they are afraid he will cut off their benefits." A caseworker resigned when his client announced she was carrying his baby. "Dumb ass ... should have paid for the abortion like I asked him too!" she announced in the Maximus office, angry after she heard another client boast that she was sleeping with him, too.

Maximus encouraged the hiring of family and friends, calling it an effective way to lure and keep talent. As head of the office, Leutermann certainly practiced what he preached. He put his wife, his son, and his niece on the payroll, along with his mistress and his mistress's mother. The gossip about the boss's affair reached the point that Leutermann urged subordinates not to mention it in front of his wife. In a memo labeled "Rumors and Soap Operas," Leutermann wrote: "Our office continues to suffer through a problem of useless, superfluous, and often insidious rumormongering... MAXIMUS does not have time to fixate on this type of drivel." Leutermann's girlfriend, a senior Maximus manager, was pregnant with his child when he hired her; at the time he circulated the memo complaining about rumors, they had an eight-month-old son. The woman who rose to the number-two job in the Maximus office, Paula Lampley, had her son on the payroll, too, until he drew thirty years for reckless homicide. "In all of our projects, we never had personnel problems like we had up there," David Mastran, the Maximus CEO, later told me.

Perhaps he was thinking of Corey Daniels, the caseworker assigned to train Michael. He wore a platinum Dennis Rodman do and watched soap operas at his desk. Playing his voice mail on the speakerphone, he deleted clients' messages

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as soon as he heard their names. Bo-rring! Heard that! "The guy's a flipping goof," Michael said. A background check would have shown that Daniels was also a convicted forger, with an arrest record that included kidnapping, battery, and impersonating a police officer. Maximus hired him while he was on parole. A few months after his tutelage of Michael, Daniels was back in court, charged with extorting nearly $4,000 from his clients. (In a trial that largely pitted his word against theirs, he was acquitted.) Michael wondered what he had gotten into: "Drug abuse, check kiting, knocking up people—what is it about this place?"

W-2 buys the crack

Tracking a Maximus client named Opal Caples, I was developing my own concerns about the W-2 bureaucracy. We met in the summer of 1997 at another W-2 agency, a nonprofit grassroots group called the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC). It, too, was a mess. I spent an hour in a room of corralled indigents, listening to a job counselor read from an almanac of occupations. It was social work as farce: "Mathematics: reading graphs and stuff like that—it gets real deep when it comes to mathematics . . . Agriculture: that thing with cows, gets real deep—giving them hormones? . . . Social studies: like socialization, only you studying it . . . Forestry: why don't we see any more wolves? Somebody eating them?"

I included Opal in an article about the challenges W-2 faced, and she wound up posed with Tommy Thompson on the cover of *The New York Times Magazine*. She was also, secretly, a cocaine addict in the process of relapsing. Six months later, her addiction was out of control. She auctioned off her furniture to drug dealers. She smoked up her food stamps. One day, she failed to pick up her three little girls from the day care center that kept them after school. "I didn't forget—I was just high," she said.

W-2 variously ignored and abetted her demise. Her original caseworker, Darlene Haines, left OIC for jobs at Goodwill and Maximus. Then she got convicted of check forgery and wound up on the other side of the desk, as a W-2 client herself. With Haines gone, Opal went months with no caseworker at all. Facing eviction, she finally showed up at OIC's door, wild-eyed and wasted, begging to be seen. Had the receptionist bothered to look in the file, she would have known that the thin disheveled woman seeking help was a mother on drugs. (A previous caseworker had documented it a year earlier.) Instead, she said the office didn't see walk-ins.

A cousin called Opal's mother, who came from Chicago and got the girls. Opal fled to a drug den. With her new address in Maximus's district, OIC transferred the case, and the monthly checks continued to flow. Opal, the W-2 poster child, was pregnant and living in a crack house. And Wisconsin's celebrated program was buying the crack.

Golf balls, Melba Moore, and clowns

Whatever Maximus could blame for its problems, it couldn't blame a shortage of cash. As Opal was spending her money on drugs, Maximus went on a much grander binge, showering the town with more than $1 million of billboards, TV ads, and corporate tchotchkes, virtually all financed out of welfare funds. Like a mafia wiretap or the Watergate tapes, the bookkeeping has the lurid appeal of shabby sin exposed to daylight. The company spent $100,000 of program money on backpacks, coffee mugs, and other promotional fluff. It spent tens of thousands on employee entertainment. It spent $3,000 to take clients roller-skating and $2,600 for professional clowns. Though Maximus later agreed to repay $500,000 to the state and donate another $500,000 to community groups, the true extent of the waste will never be known because the records were in such disarray. For any welfare program to spend money like this defies comprehension. Why would a profit-seeking enterprise indulge in such chaos and waste?

The answer starts with the financial incentives of W-2. It was designed as a risk-management system, much like an HMO. Each agency got a fixed payment to serve its region; in return, the agency financed everything from benefits to telephone bills. Just as HMOs were supposed to profit by keeping people healthy, W-2 agencies were supposed to profit by keeping them employed. The more an agency cut its caseload, the more its profits would grow. Yet faced with the work rules, so many clients walked away—the state budgeted for 50,000 cases, but only 23,000 enrolled—the agencies were rolling in dough. The catch is that unrestricted profits were capped at 7 percent of the contract, or $4.2 million in Maximus's case. After that, the agencies kept only 10 percent of any leftover funds, so they had little incentive to cut costs. In other words, Maximus found itself with a big pot of someone else's money to spend. Spend it they did, in an attempt to burnish the company's image.

There were Maximus water bottles and Maximus visors. There were Maximus golf balls, towels, and tees, for all those golfers on the Maximus rolls. A succession of minority fairs and fetes wound up with a Maximus check. There was a Maximus jingle. Make that two Maximus jingles; the first, rendered in a minor key, was recommissioned after a consultant warned that in "keeping with the Maximus image, the music should not reflect sad or dark tones." In one of Leutermann's wilder schemes, Maximus spent more than $23,000 to bring in Melba Moore, the once-upon-a-time Broadway star for what flyers called an "exclusive inspirational concert for Maximus families." The sparse attendance translated into an average ticket cost of about $125.

Maximus wasn't the only agency taking a joy ride on welfare funds. OIC spent $67,000 to sponsor the Ray Rhodes Show, the weekly football rundown hosted by the coach of the Green Bay Packers. Another disturbing report at Goodwill, which ran two Milwaukee regions and therefore was the state's largest W-2 agency. Auditors found it spent more than $270,000 of program funds outside the state, mostly in an unsuccessful attempt to win a contract in Arizona; the contract went to Maximus.

The waste, though concealed for years, finally came to light. Not so with the deeper problem of W-2, its neglect of so many clients. What George Leutermann called "our dismal performance" on the state's first client activity report, didn't tell Maximus anything its managers hadn't known: Case-

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work was weak to nonexistent, and most recipients were idle. Keith Garland, the Maximus manager of quality control, said that out of a caseload of nearly 1,500, "We had maybe 100 people doing something." As for the rest: "We didn't have a clue."

A few months after Maximus learned of its results on the client activity report, the state announced the criteria it would use for contract renewal. There were, among other standards, three major measures of casework. The Feps could each handle no more than 55 clients at a time. They had to keep their employability plans up-to-date. And they had to make sure 80 percent of their clients had a full slate of assignments. This was more bureaucratic bunk. The state didn't ask whether Opal got a job—it asked whether she had an employability plan. Plus, it was easy to manipulate the data: The state's sole source of information was CARES. The state had no way to know whether the assignments in the computer were real, much less whether clients were doing them. For months, Maximus tried to round up its clients and give them something to do. But if all else failed, state rules did permit another option: Just type something in the system and send the client a copy. The client might never even know.

Opal certainly didn't. Finding her stale file in his first stack of cases, Michael Steinborn quickly sent her an appointment letter. He needed to update her employability plan, since without one, her case would fail to meet state standards. When she didn't appear, he simply went into CARES, wrote a plan, and stuck it in the mail; it showed her aspiring to become a teacher's aide. He didn't know she was addicted to crack. He didn't know she was pregnant. He didn't know she was living in a drug house while her mother raised her kids. He had never met her. But with that, Opal's case was now passing W-2's standards. "CARES is a fantasyland," he said. Maximus got its contract renewed. And the following year, W-2 won a prestigious Innovations in American Government award from the Ford Foundation and Harvard, which dispatched a researcher on a whirlwind Wisconsin tour. One of the qualities the award officials praised was W-2's financial efficiency. The other was its casework.

$3.91 an hour

About six months into his tenure at Maximus, Michael felt something strange happen. He decided he might be good at the job, and that the job might do some good. Casework requires a balance between inspiration and caution; balance wasn't Michael's forte. He stayed up past midnight to rewrite one woman's résumé. (She didn't show up the next day.) He offered to babysit while another enrolled in a training program. (She still didn't go.) When a client showed up desperate for diapers, he blew off his plan for a beer and gave her his last $10. Michael had a calculator routine. Follow along, he would say. W-2 pays $673 a month. There are 4.3 weeks in a month and 40 hours in a week. Pivoting the calculator, he would show what welfare paid: $3.91 an hour. "Do you think you can do better?" He was waiting to see someone change.

Michael thought he had seen it all, but some things hit him afresh. One seemingly demure 21-year-old always had new hairstyles and clothes. He wondered how she was getting by. One day, she burst into tears and told him; an old man was paying to kiss her between the legs. Michael was stunned to discover that another client had a terminal liver disease. He had pegged her as a malingerer until the doctor warned she had five months to live. What's more, the county was threatening to drop her from Medicaid. Michael stood over the county supervisor's desk, ranting so wildly she started to call the security guard. In retrospect, Michael began to think of this period as a crazy jaunt, his SuperFep stage. "I started thinking, 'Maybe I could make a difference.'"

And then she was back: the woman without a coat. She reappeared, unscheduled one day, loud, raspy, and coatless still. He tried to act indignant about her claim that he hadn't helped. But his resolve melted in a hail of denials and her loud, sing-songy Mi-ikes. "I never said that, Mi-ike! I never told a lie about you!" She popped up in his office, talking gibberish—God is money, the Devil is deaf—but in between, her story trickled out. She was 39, with a grown daughter and a 10-year-old son. Her mother had been a church woman and her father had kept a job. Then a decade ago, she went to a party where people were smoking something new. She figured it couldn't hurt to try it. She stole, she whored, she slept in the gutter. Only her mother's death, two years ago, gave her the resolve to stop. "I lost my soul on crack, Mi-ike. I'm about business now, Mi-ike, I'm about business."

At first, Michael wasn't sure if he cared. But her stories had a morbid pull, and there was something obligating about her trust. Oddly, he started feeling half pleased when his train wreck of a client would arrive. While Michael didn't say so, she wasn't the only member of the tandem who often felt desperate about getting through the day. At one point, she brought him a crinkled sheet of greeting-card verse: "Obstacles are only what you see when you take your eye off the goal." He tacked it to his wall.

Bonding was one thing. Binding her to the scaffold of W-2 was another. In January, Michael assigned her to sort clothes at the St. Vincent dePaul Society. She never showed up. In February, she announced she was going to be a nursing assistant. She didn't follow through, but "I just didn't have the heart to cut her off," he said. In March, when she got an eviction notice, Michael grew newly concerned. Maximus had a unit to deal with evictions, but it was the same one that dealt with coats. The landlord removed her front door. It took Michael weeks, but he found a solution. A nonprofit group would pay her security deposit. In exchange, it would become her "protective payee," cashing her W-2 check, paying the landlord, and giving her whatever remained. All she had to do was to pick an apartment. SuperFep had gotten it done!

But she didn't pick an apartment. She moved to a shelter. And the next thing Michael knew, she was sitting in his boss's office, complaining that no one would help her. Michael erupted. What was she doing in a homeless shelter? Her answers didn't make sense. All the vacant houses were on the south side, she said. "I can't live on the south side, Mi-ike." She was acting so goofy it was almost enough to make him think she was back on drugs. He started to taunt her: What, are your connections on the north side? She taunted him back: I walk

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by my connections all day! He hadn't been serious. She wasn't still using? She wasn't still smoking crack? "Yeah, I'm smoking crack!" Earlier she had told him she had been clean for two years. "I told you what you wanted to hear."

Michael felt the room spin. He had poured some subconscious drive for redemption into a crackhead who had scammed him. "I felt really stupid and really useless as somebody who was supposed to be helping her," he said. "And I felt very sad for her son." More shouting followed, then a parting embrace. He needed to refer her to a more specialized caseworker. "Do what you got to do, Mi-ike. I always do."

Backsliding into sadness

He went home and told his girlfriend he was looking for another job. His clients bear out the cynic's adage: No good deed among Feps ever goes unpunished. He got no argument from his girlfriend, Jai. Her own mother had spent years collecting welfare, while sending her to live with relatives. "I'd tell them their sorry ass was always gonna be in the gutter," she said. "He calls them 'job seekers,' I call them 'money seekers.' I'd cuss 'em out and lose that job!" Michael was going back to hanging drywall. You nail it, and it stays in place. His midnight resolve faded with morning; he had rent to pay.

To boost his spirits, he hung up a "Certificate of Completion" that belonged to a woman he hardly knew. Angiwetta Hills had walked in at closing hour, looking as ragged as her tale. She was living in a shelter and a caseworker's error had cut off her check. Michael braced for the tirade. Instead, she apologized that she hadn't been able to change her clothes. Michael spent hours restoring her benefits. Then she surprised him with perfect attendance in a motivation class. It wasn't a new life, or even a new job, but the surprise ran in both directions. "He said, 'Everything's going to be all right, Angiwetta. You put in your half, and I'll put in mine,'" she said.

His expectations of Dinah Doty ran just as low. At 23, she was a high school dropout, pregnant with her fourth child, and about to be evicted. He rushed to get her a special grant, but she got evicted, anyway. Once her maternity leave expired, he gave her the calculator spiel: $3.91 an hour, can you beat it? The next week, she announced she had a job at a homeless shelter for nearly $8 an hour. And she seemed so—he felt embarrassed to say it—proud. "Michael gave me that motivation to get up and basically open my eyes," she told me. "Michael understands where I'm coming from."

On that, she may have been more right than she knew. He had lost his business, wrecked his marriage, and wasted his shot at a college degree. There were days when he couldn't look in a mirror. "I say, 'I know what it's like to be down and out. I know what it's like to not even be able to get out of bed,'" he said. Convinced he had nothing left to learn about ghetto life, Michael learned something, anyway. "They don't want to be perceived as vulnerable," he said of his clients. "But when you cut away the exterior, they're sad—sad for themselves, sad for their children, sad that they haven't done more with their lives. And they're just aching for you to listen."

The case he saw as his biggest success can be seen as a tribute to either his ample gifts or his lowered expectations. Shelley Block had collected $6,000 the previous year without doing a thing. Inheriting her case, Michael sent letters. Michael made calls. Michael took away her check. That made his telephone ring. "What—you don't give out checks?" she said. He told her to come see him in the morning. "I don't do mornings," she said. Finally, she darkened his door. Literally. She weighed more than 300 pounds, with a pierced tongue and a tattooed neck. Michael found her enchanting. When she talked about becoming a nursing aide, Michael told her the truth: She was too fat to stand up all day. "I respected him for that," she told me. He arranged a work assignment at Maximus, to keep her in sight. They talked—about her boyfriend, his crack problem, her days in a gang. "He made me feel like he actually cared," she said.

After a year on Michael's caseload, Shelley Block got a job. It was nothing that either one of them would mistake for a social triumph: a part-time job at an after-school program, driving a bus. It paid $7.25 an hour. It might lead to something better. But probably not. "Fep of the year," he said to himself. "A part-time bus driver. Big deal." Not long after, one of Michael's coworkers was down in the dumps, griping about the caseworker's lot. The clients don't listen. The system's a mess. The whole thing's a big con. Michael stunned himself with his response. "We do God's work here" he said. For a moment, he believed it.

"The irony kills me"

Michael Steinborn remained at Maximus, though he stopped working directly with clients. Burned out on their crises, he moved into a job trying to line up prospective employers. Soon he saw welfare from another angle. He split up with Jai after they had a second child, who needed months of hospitalization. As a single mother with a disabled infant, Jai no longer felt able to work, and she and the kids went on W-2. Michael said he felt ashamed to have his own children on welfare. But he also said the checks helped nurture their daughter to health. "The irony kills me: I'm telling people this isn't the way, and my own family ends up on the system," he said. It was an illustration of what he had long suspected, that the line between Michael and his clients was thin.

The broader bureaucracy remained troubled, too. As the evidence of its financial mismanagement surfaced, Goodwill withdrew from W-2. Bleeding red ink, the YWCA did, too. United Migrant Opportunity Services ran up big casework fines. Then OIC, where I first met Opal, wound up in the news, after $270,000 of program funds were discovered in the bank account of a corrupt state senator. The politician, Gary George, pleaded guilty to federal conspiracy charges, after acknowledging he took the money while serving in a position to influence the awarding of state contracts. In the case of OIC, those contracts totaled $140 million. The OIC president, Carl Gee, has been indicted for his alleged role in the kickback scheme. Maximus, meanwhile, has expanded its turf; running two of Milwaukee's six districts. Far from offering an anomalous look at the troubled bureaucracy, OIC and Maximus now combined account for nearly three quarters of the state's caseload. ◆

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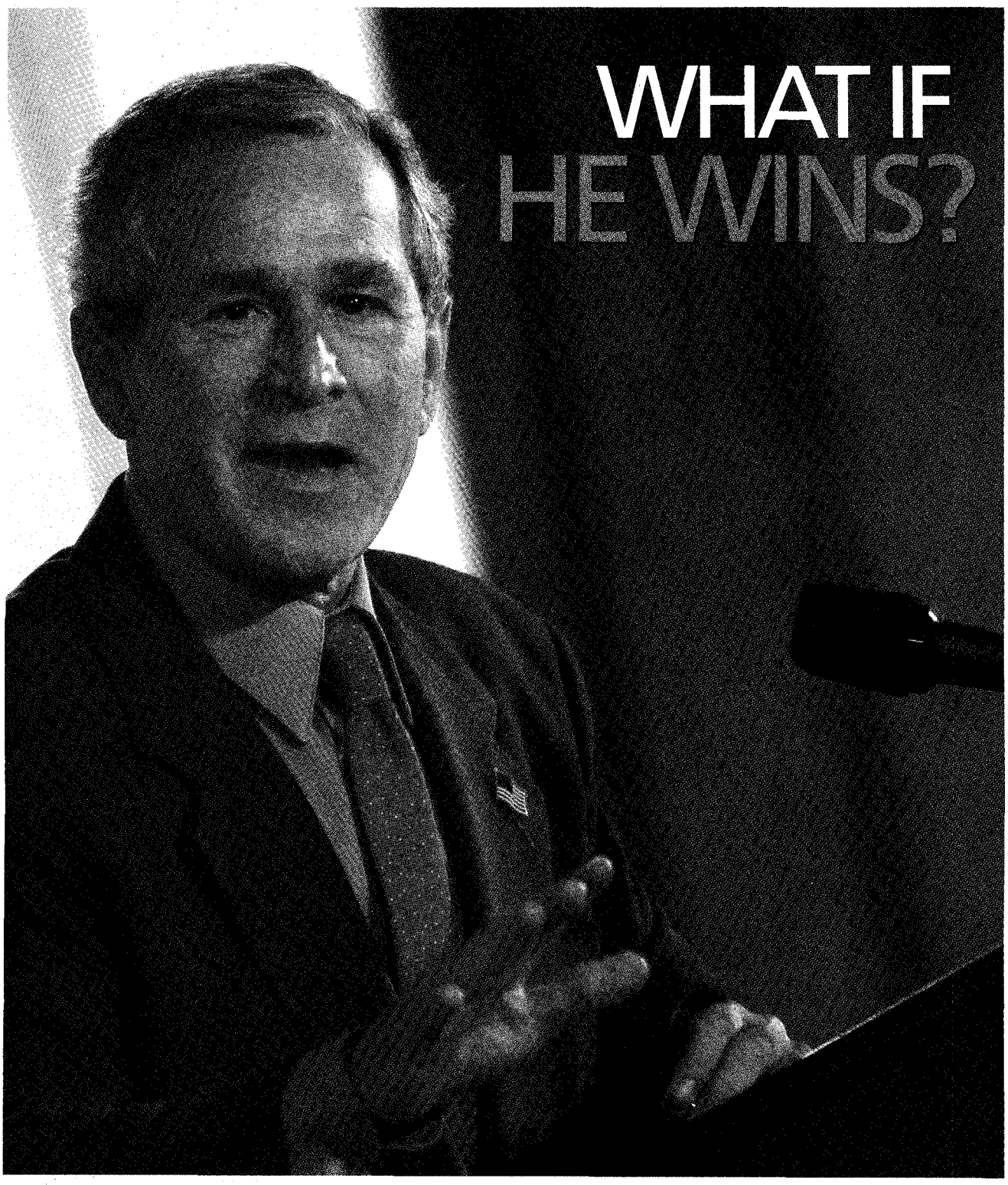

WHAT IF HE WINS?

Predictions by: Paul Begala, Christopher Buckley, E.J. Dionne, Kevin Drum, Nancy Dwight, Gregg Easterbrook, Mickey Edwards, James K. Galbraith, Todd Gitlin, David Greenberg, Jeff Greenfield, Elaine Kamarck, Sebastian Mallaby, Grover Norquist, Gideon Rose, and Cass Sunstein

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The Triumph of Anything Goes

By David Greenberg

We all know that George W. Bush's reelection would probably bring about more illiberal policies regarding social justice, education, the arts, economic fairness, environmental protection, consumer rights, racial equality, foreign policy, civil liberties, and workers' rights. Less obvious, but perhaps as consequential over the long term, is how a Bush victory in November would change the fundamental practice of democracy in Washington. If the public were to award Bush a vote of confidence on the basis of his first-term record, it would amount to a ratification of the ruthless style and philosophy that have underpinned Bush's presidency—what Barack Obama at the Democratic Convention called "the politics of anything goes."

An oft-quoted quip of Bush's—"If this were a dictatorship, it'd be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator"—certainly doesn't reflect any plan of his to abolish democratic procedures or principles. But it does reveal his impatience with those procedures and principles. Bush and his team have shown contempt for many of the bedrock elements of liberal democracy, including public access to information; a press that interrogates its leaders; a give-and-take between parties that represent different interests; a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; the preference for reason over the use of force; and the support of legal safeguards to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power by the executive. They have routinely violated the bounds of acceptable political behavior in a democracy.

The instances of this misbehavior are so numerous as to fill a small book; indeed, they've already filled many such books. Yet the anything-goes attitude comprises more than the sum total of these instances. It's a philosophy, a set of premises and prejudices, that scorns deliberation and dissent, exalts brute power, drips with disrespect for the spirit (if not the letter) of the law, stiff-arms compromise, and mocks the popular will.

It's hard to find a better exemplar of this attitude than George W. Bush. Nonetheless, Bush himself remains only, the reigning figurehead of this philosophy. Since Newt Gingrich assumed the GOP leadership in the 1990s, and since the party became nearly congruent with the conservative movement, this strain of ruthlessness has come to permeate the Republican Party. Republican behavior during three major national traumas of late—the impeachment of Bill Clinton, the 2000 Florida election recount, and the invasion of Iraq—was strikingly similar: In each case, their leaders rammed ahead, using means fair and foul, to reach a preordained outcome. Each time, they brushed aside not just the doubts of the American public or other nations, not just inconvenient facts, but also concern about the law itself. For these reasons, Bush has been eliciting comparisons to Richard Nixon, the last president who showed such contempt for democratic procedures.

Because Nixon was foolish enough to record himself committing high crimes, we now think of Watergate as an episode in which, as the cliché goes, the system works. The flip side of that statement, however, is that the system almost failed. Certainly, just after Election Day 1972, when Nixon had routed George McGovern, many Americans were despairing that his thuggery would go unpunished. Talk of "repression" and "gangsterism," which had just months before seemed like so much New Left sloganeering, now approximated reality. And Nixon himself knew well that his 1972 victory strengthened his hand to wreak revenge. Throughout that fall, he spoke privately about the viciousness with which he would retaliate, once reelected, against his political foes on the left and in the press.

Something similar could happen following a Bush win this November. For the electorate to turn Bush out of office would be to proclaim that it rejects this manner of politics. But to award Bush another four years—provided he really wins this time—would signal that a majority of Americans not only tolerates but endorses his anti-democratic style. And it could be interpreted by Democrats as a lesson that resistance is futile.

Already, despite losing the popular vote, Bush has governed as if he'd won in a landslide. "From the very day we walked in the building, [there was] a notion of a sort of restrained presidency because it was such a close election," Cheney has said, "that lasted maybe 30 seconds." And with a Republican-controlled Supreme Court and Congress, Bush and Cheney faced few checks on their power.

Should Bush win a second term, the politics of anything-goes would only intensify—because it would no longer be seen as controversial. It would no longer be noteworthy that an administration declassifies documents to embarrass opponents, as when John Ashcroft released a memo by former Clinton administration official and 9/11 Commission member Jamie Gorelick. It would become more or less acceptable to threaten the jobs of bureaucrats who won't play ball in misleading Congress, as happened with chief actuary Richard Foster,

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who wanted to answer congressional questions about the price tag of the administration's Medicare plan. Or to toss aside legal and constitutional rights of the accused, as at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. Or to interfere with the public's right to know, as the administration did in ordering federal agencies to provide fewer records under the Freedom of Information Act.

Fifteen years ago, conservatives put forth the "broken windows" theory of crime. If small street crimes are tolerated, the theory went, neighborhoods begin to accept them as normal and the result is more lawlessness. The same thing will happen if a democracy tolerates Bush's ruthless behavior as business as usual. If voters validate this modus operandi, it won't just accelerate; it will cease to draw even the modest level of scrutiny and outrage that the administration's transgressions have attracted so far. Failing to protest these breaches of the norms that govern political conduct will encourage more such violations.

Historically, second-term presidents have gotten cocky and overreached: Franklin D. Roosevelt with his court-packing plan, Nixon with Watergate (which began in his first term), Ronald Reagan with Iran-Contra. But no law of history decrees that the system always corrects itself. With no independent counsel and no Democratic Congress to investigate, with a press cowed into submission, with a court system loaded with Federalist Society apparatchiks, who will restrain Bush's ruthless agenda? Only the people. And the only time they can do it is on Nov. 2. ◆

The Plutocrats Go Wild

By James K. Galbraith

Next year's economic difficulties are already on the horizon. Growth is slowing as the housing market cools and consumers rein in their spending. Inflation is rising a bit, driven mainly by oil prices, health care costs, and corporate price increases, fueling a spectacular recent profit surge. Job creation is weak, and wages are flat. This is the new stagflation—an unpleasant reminder of the economic cost of unilateral war.

But George W. Bush has never tried to fix the economy in the short term. His focus is on making long-term—and, he hopes, irreversible—changes to taxes and social programs; foreign policy; and the government's capacity to regulate the environment, natural resource use, and corporate behavior.

Bush's top economic priority has always been to cut taxes on the wealthy; as he famously said, the "have-mores" are his political base. The marginal income-tax rate, the estate tax, the tax on dividends, and the proceeds of the profits tax all fell sharply in his first term. His second term could finish the job, shifting the tax base to consumption, perhaps even abolishing the income tax for a value-added tax (as Republican Speaker Dennis Hastert now suggests). Virtually the whole tax burden will then fall on the middle class, on working Americans, and on the poor.

As revenues fall, spending programs will come under new attack. But not defense spending: The Pentagon's budget will remain inviolate. Indeed, the military may demand still more spending, as the true costs of stabilizing Iraq gradually become clear. New arms races—with North Korea over missiles and missile defense—and new conflicts, perhaps with Iran or China, may come into view. We will need many more soldiers and much more money if such conflicts occur.

And so, given the budget deficits ahead, the battle royal will be fought over what remains of federal social spending. With Alan Greenspan at his side, Bush will challenge Congress to slice, dice, and eviscerate. The privatization of Social Security—an invisible issue right now—will surely resurface once the votes are safely cast in November.

Meanwhile Greenspan will try to steer between a cost-driven price inflation and a sagging labor market. Should he raise interest rates or hold the line? The Fed started boosting rates just before the recent spate of bad economic news revealed slower growth, weak job gains, slumping consumer spending, and falling producer prices. This shows that its insight into our present problems isn't deep.

Indeed, the Fed is driving blind. Greenspan is aiming for a "natural interest rate"—a hypothetically neutral interest rate that would neither stimulate nor retard growth or inflation—whose value, as he admits, he doesn't know. How this idea came to dominate Fed thinking isn't clear: The concept is a throwback to the economics of a century ago and is the basis of almost no modern research. But we do know that higher interest rates will mean more pressure on debt-ridden households, slower consumer spending growth, and

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stagnant or falling stock prices—as anyone can see.

Bush's second term may see a crisis of the dollar, now heavily reliant on reserve-asset stockpiling by China and Japan, which own a huge proportion of our debt paper. In effect, those countries are sending us cheap goods in return for expensive paper, working hard for no current material reward. Will they continue this odd behavior for four more years, even if tensions erupt over Korea or Taiwan? Or will China, especially, diversify into euros, or perhaps into commodities, aggravating global inflation? Will the neglected states of Latin America, increasingly alienated from the United States, set off a banking crisis with debt defaults? We'll see. The dangers are real, and we are totally unprepared.

All of this brings to mind the late 19th century, a time of budding empires, rapacious trusts, Social Darwinism, and populist upheaval; when economic battles raged over plutocracy and consumption taxes, chronic unemployment, rising poverty, and financing wars of conquest; and when the world economy was dominated by financial panics and the commodity cycle. George Bush and his allies have been modeling themselves on William McKinley, the champion of vested interests in the Gilded Age.

Fortunately for America, McKinley was succeeded by Teddy Roosevelt, a progressive Republican who fought the monopolies and favored the environment, and then by Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat who brought us the income tax and inspired the search for a global system of collective security. True, it took another generation to break finally with rule by the corporate rich. But eventually, there did come the Great Depression and Franklin Roosevelt, who gave us public works, Social Security, the National Labor Relations Act, and the SEC.

The cozy plutocracy of McKinley and his successors—Taft, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover—could not stand before the needs of the modern world. It can't be brought back now. Bush's effort to do so will bring misery for many, perhaps for many years. But the final outcome is not in doubt. Bush's second term, if it comes, will fail, and America will thereafter change course; democracy and common sense will assert themselves in the end. ◆

The Democratic Party is Toast

By Grover Norquist

The modern Democratic Party cannot survive the reelection of President George W. Bush and another four years of Republican control of both Congress and the White House.

No brag. Just fact.

The modern Democratic Party is the party of government. Its growth is the health of the state—and vice versa. Over time, all the party's building blocks are dependent on continuous support and reinforcement by the power of the central government. Trial lawyer money is now a major part of the Democratic Party, but it is wholly dependent on legislators and courts maintaining the present tort laws that allow lawyers to interject themselves into any and all contracts and relationships. They siphon off some $240 billion a year—$40 billion of which stays with a few thousand lawyers. Labor unions, once the godfather of the Democratic Party but now displaced by the richer and more photogenic trial lawyers, cannot maintain their $8 billion in compulsory union dues without the laws that make such payments mandatory. Both wings of the dependency movement—those locked into welfare dependency and the bureaucrats who get paid well to manage others' dependency (and make sure none of them get jobs and become Republicans) are wholly dependent on legislators halting further welfare reform. Big city political machines thrive on federal grants and state-granted powers. And the coercive utopians—the radical environmentalists, animal-rights activists, feminists, and others who would use state power to force on us tiny non-flushable toilets and cars too small to hold families, take away the circus and our pet cats, and otherwise impose more fussbudget impositions on our lives than Leviticus—all depend on government grants to use and misuse federal and state power.

But outside state power, the Democratic coalition withers and dies. Without effective control of the government, the Democratic Party is like a fish out of water, a vampire in the sun, Antaeus held aloft, an appliance unplugged. In the past, the Democratic Party could afford to lose the presidency and remain connected to its source of power—the state—through control of the House of Representatives, and often the Senate as well. Little damage was done to the structure of the Democratic Party during the interregnums of the Eisenhower, Nixon, and George H.W. Bush administrations, because their moves could be checkmated by a Democratic Con-

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gress. With the end of 40 years of Democratic gerrymandering, states in which a majority of the congressional popular vote goes to the GOP now award a majority of congressional seats to the GOP, too. Republican-led redistricting in Texas will add an additional five to seven Republican House seats over the next few cycles. Redistricting in Texas and throughout the country ensures that Republicans will continue to control the House through 2012. Over time, the Senate—thanks to those wonderful square states out west—will trend toward 60 Republicans as the 30 red states elect Republicans and the 20 blue states elect Democrats. The anomaly of four Democratic senators hailing from Republican North and South Dakota will come to an end, as will the Republican-held Senate seat in Rhode Island.

With Democrats lacking a beachhead in Congress, four more years of Republican governance with President Bush in the White House will badly damage each of the pillars of the Democrat establishment. In the first term, the Bush Labor Department wrote modern, clear, and updated regulations as to who earns overtime pay, and when and how. Trial lawyers had used archaic and unclear rules to sue companies claiming that workers who had been salaried for decades should actually have been considered hourly workers all those years and subject to overtime pay. Dozens of similarly unclear federal rules have been fodder for trial lawyer enrichment. Simply rewriting regulations to make them clear to all will cost the trial lawyers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Other shifts in national policy will also occur. Abroad, four more years under President Bush will move America and the world towards greater free trade, spreading prosperity throughout the world and bringing more countries into the trading systems that require property rights and rule of law, draining the swamps that breed radicalism and terror. At home, a second Bush administration will permanently abolish the death tax, which not only threatens to confiscate up to half of your parents' lifetime earnings, but also leads to the creation of Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford Foundations that inevitably are taken over by liberal bureaucrats. And a steady increase in the number of honest gun owners will continue to reduce street crime and make America safer. We now have 38 states with "shall issue" concealed carry laws, and Bush just signed a law to allow all cops and retired cops to carry their guns across state lines. Over the next four years, Congress will bring such sanity to Washington, D.C., and expand the number of Americans who can carry across state lines. Less crime means fewer prison guards and parole officers, shrinking the government workforce which tends to be 10 percent more Democrat and less Republican. Solving problems without hiring a lot of government workers is a virtuous cycle.

We'll also be able to shrink the number of government workers already on the payroll. Over the next few years, a high number of middle managers in federal and state governments will become eligible for retirement, allowing government at all levels to reduce the middle management bloat that the private sector shed in the 1980s—but through painless attrition rather than bitter mass layoffs. This will save taxpayers billions and make government more competent and accountable. Meanwhile, four more years of GOP control means four more years where labor laws are not changed to force workers to pay dues to join unions they don't wish to join. Twenty-two states have Right to Work laws to limit compulsory unionism; that number will grow, and the decline of labor unions from 33 percent of the workforce in the 1950s to 20 percent in 1980 to 13 percent today will continue. Every worker who doesn't join the union is another worker who doesn't pay $500 a year to organized labor's political machine.

Four more years of President Bush will also accelerate one of the most important demographic changes in America over the past 20 years: the number of Americans who own stock. In 1980, only 20 percent of adults owned stocks in mutual funds, 401ks, IRAs and direct contribution pensions. Today, that number is over 60 percent and growing. Bush wants to create Retirement Savings Accounts to allow every American to sock away up to $5,000 for retirement tax-free; similarly, the president has proposed Lifetime Savings Accounts allowing Americans to save $7,500 for education, housing, or health costs during their working lives. Every American who owns his

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own mutual fund is decreasingly susceptible to the siren call of class warfare. (How did Dick Gephardt do this primary season?) According to pollster Scott Rasmussen, if you own $5000 in stock you are 18 percent less likely to be a Democrat and more likely to be a Republican. Every demographic group, including race, gender, age, and income, becomes more Republican with stock ownership. Four more years of more and bigger individual retirement accounts, heath savings accounts, RSAs, and LSAs means four more years of more Republicans and fewer Democrats.

Last, a Bush-Cheney victory in November will create the conditions for a constructive contest among leading Republican governors and senators for the presidential nomination in 2008. Dick Cheney's heart troubles mean that he will retire with Bush in 2009. Usually the sitting vice president is the natural enemy of all ambitious politicians of his party, but now all Republicans want a Bush-Cheney victory in 2004, so they can run for an open presidential ticket in 2008. The Democrats face the opposite dilemma: Every ambitious Democrat hopes Kerry-Edwards fails, so that the presidency will open for her (or him) in 2008 rather than in 2012, 2016, or 2020. A Bush-Cheney win will lead to Republican governors from Colorado, Mississippi, Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York to compete to be the most Reaganite governor—a positive result no matter who wins. And a Bush-Cheney win in 2004 will leave Terry McAuliffe and Bill and Hillary in complete and unchallenged control of the Democratic Party at least through 2008. This is good for the Republicans, if not the republic. ◆

The Scandals Finally Break

By Kevin Drum

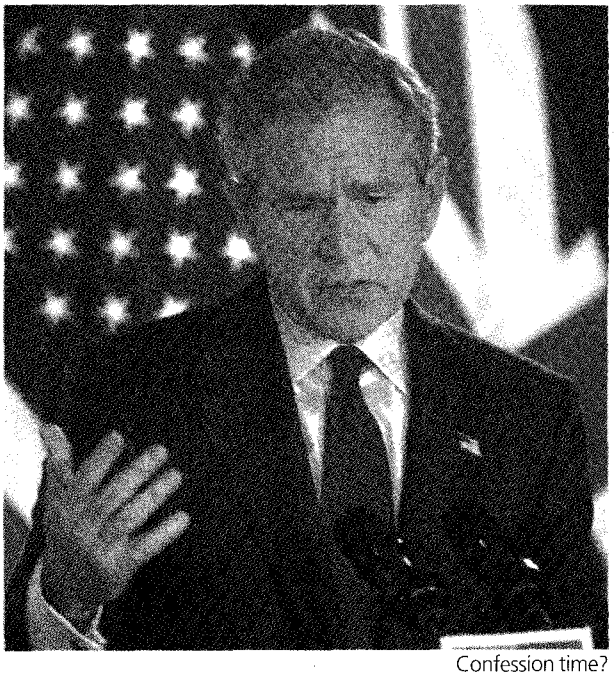
What do we have to look forward to if George W. Bush is elected to a second term? One word: scandal.

Don't believe me? Consider the highlight reel of reelected presidents over the past 50 years. Ike won a second term and watched in dismay as his chief of staff was forced to resign over a vicuña coat. Richard Nixon buried George McGovern in 1972 and then resigned a year and a half later when Watergate finally caught up to him. Ronald Reagan sweated out his second term wondering if he'd be impeached over Iran-Contra. Bill Clinton didn't have to wonder: Two years after his reelection, he was defending himself in the first impeachment trial in over a century.

Coincidence? Don't believe it. There are three good reasons to think that second terms naturally lend themselves to scandal, and George Bush is almost preternaturally vulnerable to every one of them. Let's count them off.

First, power corrupts. It's a truism that as leaders become used to the idea that no one can really hold them to account, they increasingly push the envelope of acceptable behavior and eventually push too far. Not just in America, but in practically every democracy, this inevitably leads to abuses of power that eventually turn into scandals both small and large.

George Bush is more susceptible than most to this dynamic. Partly this is because his party controls Congress, so he has no real political oversight to keep him honest. But it's also because both Bush and the current Republican Party leadership have already demonstrated a ruthlessness and disregard for traditional political norms unseen since Nixon was jotting down his enemies list: holding open votes while they bully recalcitrant colleagues, ramming through midterm redistricting, suspending the Freedom of Information Act in all but theory, and cavalierly hiding routine budget data from Con-



Confession time?

Photo/Getty Images

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gress—all combined with a general mania for secrecy that leaves even John Dean in awe. It's a dangerous and intoxicating brew, and George Bush has demonstrated the combination of ruthlessness, siege mentality, and religious faith in his own righteousness that makes it almost inevitable that he will take a step too far.

Second, there's the problem that second terms are, well, second terms. It takes more than two or three years for a serious scandal to unfold, and problems that start to surface midway through a president's first term usually reach critical mass midway through his second term, a phenomenon that shrewd political observer Kevin Phillips calls "the sixth-year itch." It's like a political SAT: What's the next year in the series 1958, 1974, 1986, 1998?

You don't have to be a math whiz to know that 2006 is the next stop. And once again, George Bush is especially vulnerable to this since his first term already has several good candidates for scandals waiting to flower. Take your pick: Valerie Plame? The National Guard? Abu Ghraib? Intelligence failures? Or maybe something that hasn't really crossed anybody's radar screen yet, sort of like the "third-rate burglary" at the Watergate Hotel that no one took seriously in 1972.

Third, there's the fact that scandals tend to take center stage during second terms because there's nothing to draw attention away from them. In 2000, for example, Bush ran on a platform of education reform, Medicare prescription benefits, and tax cuts—9/11 added the Iraq war as a fourth signature issue. But what's left for a second term? Education and Medicare are done deals, even most Republicans understand that tax cutting has gone as far as it can, and no one expects Bush to start another war.

This leaves a dangerous void, and so far Bush has done nothing to fill it, campaigning almost entirely on his record in the war on terror. He will surely toss out a few new issues during and after the Republican convention, but it's obvious his heart isn't really in them. What's more, it also isn't clear if any of his likely pet projects—Social Security privatization or tort reform, for example—can generate much congressional enthusiasm.

If Osama bin Laden detonates a suitcase nuke in Los Angeles, all bets are off, of course. That aside, the most likely course is a continuing low-level insurgency in Iraq, a mediocre economy, and a halfhearted second-term agenda from the White House. If you combine that with a thin legislative majority, an outraged Democratic Party, and a public increasingly leery of Bush's Texas-style conservatism, what you get—aside from a few rancorous battles over Supreme Court nominations—is a presidency adrift.

It's the perfect breeding ground for a major scandal, and George Bush is exactly the right guy, with exactly the right personality, to step right into it. ◆

The Empire Strikes Out

By Gideon Rose

Many people seem to think the upcoming presidential election will inevitably send American foreign policy down one of two radically different paths. Writing in the *Atlantic*, for example, the political commentator Michael Barone argues that this year's balloting may be the "most important in generations" since the Bush team would see reelection as a vindication of its aggressive course while a Kerry administration would end up kowtowing to Europe and the United Nations. Similar views echo from *The Nation* to the *National Review*.

Pish posh. Sure, there would be some differences between what the two camps would do, both in style (a lot) and substance (a little). But the similarities would be far more pronounced because Bush and Kerry's current positions on major issues just aren't that far apart—and because whoever is elected will have relatively little room for maneuver. The last few years have constituted a grand experiment, a test of what would happen if Washington threw out the standard foreign-policy playbook and just winged it. The results are now in, and they ratify most of the conventional wisdom that the Bush administration initially rejected. And although Bush and his lieutenants will never say as much publicly, and may not even admit it to themselves in private, their recent behavior shows that at some level they understand the point and don't want to be burned again.

The much-touted "Bush doctrine" is a dead letter, with each of its three pillars—preemption, regime change, and clear division between those "with us" and "with the terrorists"—now discredited and abandoned. What the administration meant by preemption, of course, was really preventive war, a concept whose poor reputation has been reinforced by the failure to find WMDs in Iraq

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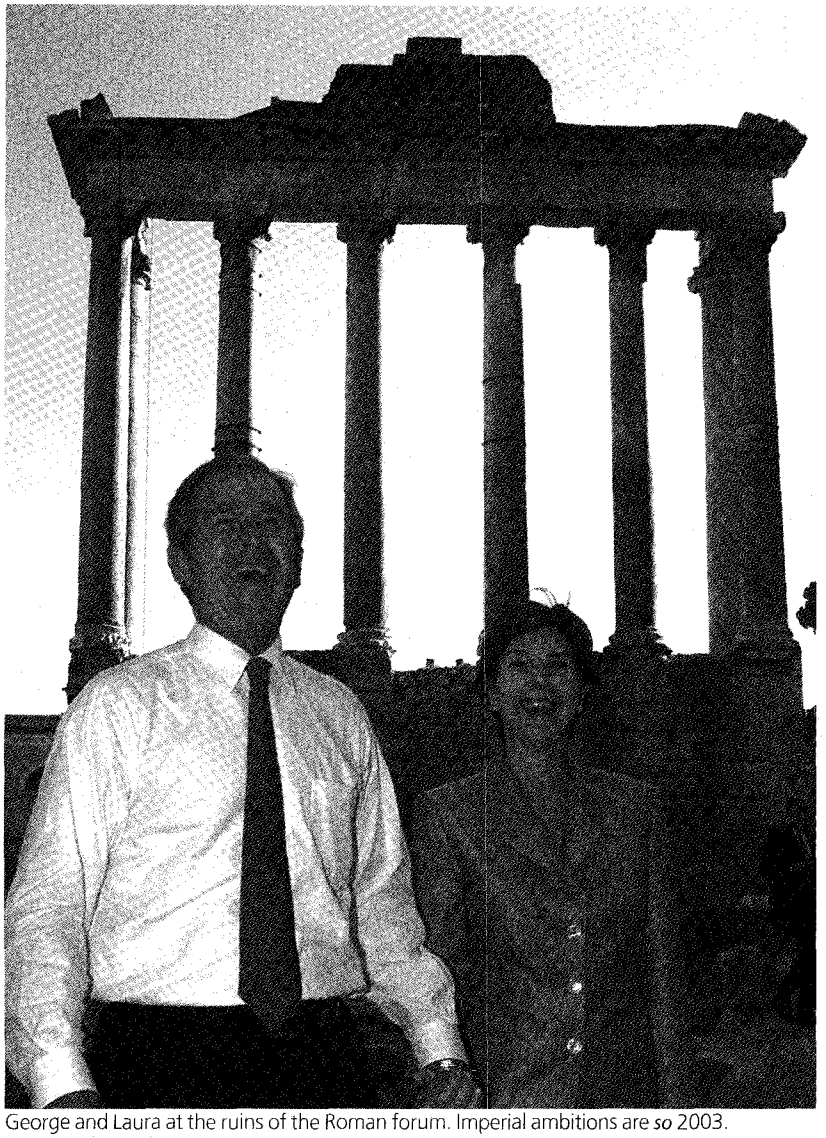

George and Laura at the ruins of the Roman forum. Imperial ambitions are *so* 2003.

Photo/Getty Images

together with the high costs and mixed results of the bungled occupation. True preemption—striking out first against an enemy whose own blow is imminent or already on the way—is still an option for American policymakers, as it always has been, but it will be adopted only in the extraordinarily rare case where there is strong, timely, and actionable intelligence that such a threat actually exists.

The second pillar, regime change, was based on the idea that problems abroad stem from the nature of certain foreign governments and can be fully solved only by replacing them with something better. Today, that remains what it was during the Cold War: a worthwhile goal unmatched by a practical strategy for achieving it. The administration's proudest boast regarding the collateral benefits of the Iraq war, for example, is that the invasion cowed Libya into giving up its nuclear ambitions. But even if one overlooks the fact that Libya was already moving in that direction and allows the claim, the case still qualifies as a victory for traditional coercive diplomacy rather than any novel or highly principled approach to international politics. What changed was neither the Libyan ruler nor the odious nature of his regime, but simply one important aspect of his behavior. The Bush administration was right to cut the deal, but the whole episode reflects a rejection of its stated principles rather than a triumph for them.

And as for dividing the world between friends and foes, the Bush team—like all its predecessors—has found itself stuck dealing regularly with those inconvenient cases in the middle. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are both crucial contributors to the problems the United States faces in the greater Middle East and crucial allies in combating them. China is both an authoritarian rising power and a major U.S. trading partner which is gradually liberalizing. Europe can be both a royal pain and a vital source of support. The Bush administration has learned the hard way that the world is full of gray areas and that an inability to "do nuance" is not an asset but a liability.

None of this was shocking news, since it represents nothing more than what is, or should be, taught in Diplomacy and National Security 101. But for some reason the Bush team needed remedial education, and by and large it took. Administration officials now rarely chatter blithely about transforming the world, and when they do, the words are safely unencumbered by substance. They no longer speak contemptuously of "Old Europe" or the United Nations, and even ask both for help on occasion. And they no longer muse about which nations might be next on the target list, disappointing their most fervent neoconservative supporters as often as they please them.

Some of these changes have been driven by politics at home, with the administration deciding that its electoral prospects depended at least partly on reassuring swing voters of its sobriety and competence. But most of the shifts have occurred because reality proved less tractable than administration ideologues guessed, and traditional approaches to foreign policy sounder. That is why the most likely scenario for a Bush second term is not a return to the vigor and recklessness of 2001-2003, but a continuation of the de facto muted realism the administration has displayed in 2004.

September 11 has set a floor on isolationism below which American foreign policy will not sink, and Iraq a ceiling on adventurism above which it will not rise. A Kerry administration would thus probably stay the course on most matters, while benefiting from not having to disguise its policies in order to avoid charges of inconsisten-

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cy and from foreign satisfaction at the Bush administration's departure.

Style does matter, and so similar substance delivered in a less abrasive manner would yield somewhat better results. But the major problems the United States faces have no easy solutions, and other countries will not be eager to sacrifice their own blood and treasure just to help reduce our existing burdens. Iraq is unlikely to stabilize itself quickly no matter who occupies the White House; Iran and North Korea are unlikely to abandon their nuclear programs, or Israelis and Palestinians their mutual enmity, if a Democrat is elected. Enough damage has been done to America's image and reputation, moreover, that in foreign affairs as in fiscal matters the hangover from the current administration's signature policies will linger for several years, constricting choices regardless of the election result. ◆

Hoover's Court Rides Again

By Cass R. Sunstein

If President Bush is reelected, he may appoint as many as four Supreme Court justices. He is likely to appoint hundreds of judges to the lower courts. What would happen?

Here's one clue. The last quarter-century has seen a determined, self-conscious, and highly-organized effort to reshape the federal judiciary. The effort has been astonishingly successful, producing a radical shift in a little over two decades. As a result of that shift, what was considered conservative in 1980 is now considered moderate; what was then moderate is now liberal; what was then liberal is now absent; and what was then reactionary is now conservative (and entirely mainstream).

Here's another clue. In the last few years, right-wing activists have become far more ambitious. There is a great deal of talk about restoration of the "Constitution in Exile"—the Constitution as it existed in 1932, before President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. Under this Constitution, the powers of the national government were sharply limited. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, not to mention the Civil Rights Act of 1964, would have been impermissible. Under the Constitution in Exile, rights to have recourse against discrimination, and to protection of privacy, were minimal. A far more significant right was freedom of contract, which threw minimum-wage legislation into constitutional doubt. The Supreme Court tends to move slowly, and under a second Bush term, it would not adopt the Constitution of 1932; but it would probably move in that direction.

For many people, the most pressing issue is the fate of *Roe v. Wade* and women's right to choose. In 1992, the Rehnquist court cut back on the ruling but preserved its core, by a narrow 5-to-4 vote. New Bush appointments might well lead the court to return the issue to the states. More broadly, a newly constituted court would be unsympathetic to any claim that the Constitution protects sexual and reproductive liberty from state intervention.

But if several appointments are made under an extended Bush presidency, the new court would likely do much more. It might strike down most campaign-finance reform. It would probably be inclined to invalidate parts of the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act as beyond Congress' authority. It might well elevate commercial speech to the same status as political speech—thus forbidding controls on commercials by tobacco companies, among others. It would probably limit congressional efforts to protect disabled people, women, and the elderly from various forms of discrimination. More radically, it might interpret the Second Amendment so as to reduce the power of Congress and the states to enact gun-control legislation.

Suppose that there aren't many new appointments to the Supreme Court and that these radical developments don't occur. The consequences of a second Bush term would still be huge, simply because of its effects on the lower courts, where the vast majority of cases are decided. On the courts of appeals, Republican appointees are far more likely to strike down environmental regulations; uphold restrictions on abortion; invalidate campaign finance laws; and reject claims by those complaining of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and discrimination on the basis of disability. (Notably, there is no difference between Republican and Democratic appointees in criminal cases; the latter aren't "softer on crime.") Where the political parties differ, the votes of federal judges of different parties often differ, too.

These differences aren't only about legal victories and losses. They're about the very meaning of the law, includ-

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ing the Constitution itself. Court of appeals rulings are accompanied by opinions that operate as precedents; these help settle the law for the future. The Americans with Disabilities Act, for example, is highly ambiguous; Republican appointees tend to read it narrowly, as a limited intrusion into the marketplace, whereas Democratic appointees tend to read it as providing broader protection for disabled people. So, too, with laws protecting the environment. These can be interpreted narrowly or broadly, and their meaning is effectively determined through judicial interpretation. Judges aren't mere ideologues; they follow the law. But in cases of reasonable doubt, the political party of the appointing president makes all the difference. President Reagan was able to produce a large-scale shift in understanding of the law, simply through his appointments; President Bush may well receive a chance to do the same.

This point actually understates the matter. Republican appointees tend to be conservative in their voting patterns. But they become far more conservative, and far more extreme, when they are sitting on a three-member court that consists only of Republican appointees. Here's one example: Republican appointees vote in favor of industry challenges to environmental regulations about half the time—but sitting only with other Republicans, they vote in favor of such challenges about three-quarters of the time!

Democratic appointees are greatly affected by sitting with Republican appointees. When Democratic appointees serve with two Republican appointees on three-judge panels, they show quite conservative voting patterns—about the same, remarkably enough, as the overall patterns of Republican appointees.

The upshot is that if President Bush has four more years, he will be able to ensure that Democratic appointees usually serve with two Republicans—and that there will be a large number of all-Republican panels. And for that very reason, he will be able to produce another massive shift in the federal judiciary. The Constitution in Exile—Herbert Hoover's Constitution—isn't likely to be restored; but don't be surprised if you see significant movement in its direction. ◆

Vengeance is His

By Paul Begala

A president who unveils his ideas for his second term in the last hundred days of his reelection campaign is admitting that he has no new ideas for the next four years. So why is George W. Bush bothering to run again, anyway? Perhaps to justify what he sees as accomplishments—principally, tax cuts for the rich and the occupation of Iraq. Perhaps for the chance to one-up his dad as a two-term President Bush. But I believe much of his second term will be given over to another motive—one that's more personal and political:

Vengeance.

If George W. Bush is given a second term, and retains a Republican Congress and a compliant federal judiciary, he and his allies are likely to embark on a campaign of political retribution the likes of which we haven't seen since Richard Nixon.

How do I know this? I'm from Texas. Again and again, I've seen Bush turn a blind eye as his henchmen have leveled zealous attacks against his political enemies—assaults which the president himself has sometimes directly encouraged. Perhaps most disturbing, the subjects of these attacks have often been longtime Bush allies who ended up on the president's enemies list for minor slights.

Back home Bush had no better Democratic buddy than House Speaker Pete Laney, a quintessential Texas good ol' boy who ran the House through his mastery of both procedure and policy. Together with the late Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, Laney was responsible for Bush's success as Texas governor. (The governor of my state has little real power, but Bush teamed ably and admirably with Laney and Bullock.)

After the Supreme Court handed the 2000 election to Gov. Bush, it was Pete Laney who let him address the nation from the chamber of the Texas House of Representatives, even introducing Bush as a bipartisan healer. Bush made a point of praising Laney, whom he called "my friend."

Two and a half years later, Bush's "friend" was holed up in Ardmore, Okla., in a vain attempt to stop a bone-crunchingly partisan redistricting of Texas that could not have been brought about without the approval of his buddy George. The congressional map was redrawn just two years after the last redistricting—not because population patterns had shifted, but because political power had shifted. When Democrats fled the state to prevent legislative action on the redistricting plan, the Texas Rangers were called in to track them down. And when the Rangers couldn't find the Democrats, the Republicans called in President Bush's federal Department of Homeland Security, which found them by tracing Laney's private plane.

Today Pete Laney is no longer Speaker—with Bush's

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help, Republicans took over the Texas Legislature—and now Pete is in the fight of his life, running in a new, Republican district created with the support of his old buddy.

Thanks, George.

Laney's story is especially upsetting because Bush tried to destroy someone who had never crossed him—simply for the crime of being a Democrat.

Tony Sanchez's story is different. He actually dared to run against Bush's handpicked successor. The son of a typewriter repairman, Sanchez is a great American success story, rising from days packing produce on the Mexican border to eventual success in the very areas that had disappointed Bush: in the oil patch and, later, in banking. In 1994, Sanchez donated $300,000 to Bush's campaign, making him one of Bush's leading Democratic supports and putting him in league with Ken Lay as one of the largest patrons of Bush's early political career.

Sanchez stood by Bush when he ran for reelection, and then when he ran for president. But he just couldn't stomach Rick Perry, Bush's lieutenant governor, who took over when Bush went to Washington. So Sanchez decided to run himself, perhaps naively thinking his old pal George might be neutral in a race between his lieutenant governor and his most prominent Hispanic supporter.

Fat chance.

Bush not only actively campaigned for Perry, but he also allowed Perry's goons to run vicious ads against Sanchez. They portrayed Sanchez as somehow complicit in the 1985 torture and murder of DEA agent Kiki Camarena because during the 1980s, drug dealers used Sanchez's bank (as they did most banks on the border) without his knowledge.

What the ads did not mention is that Sanchez helped federal authorities bust the bad guys, and earned the praise of the Reagan Justice Department. In fact, when the ads ran, David Almaraz, the DOJ official who handled the investigation, denounced them, saying, "Perry's claim is absolutely preposterous and completely false, without any foundation and fact."

But Sanchez's vast fortune was no match for good old-fashioned Texas racism. Do the math: Mexican American plus rich plus bank plus drugs equals disaster. Sanchez was crushed in the 2002 election.

We don't have to wonder what George W. Bush might do with four more years in the most powerful job on earth—and with no future campaigns to curb his enthusiasm. He's already countenanced the abuse of the federal anti-terror agency to hound Pete Laney. He's already smiled approvingly as racist ads were run against Tony Sanchez. And he's made vengeance a top priority in Washington already.

A prime example is the White House's treatment of Tom Daschle in late 2001. Up until that point, Daschle had been an amiable partner, working with Bush to craft compromises on several important early pieces of legislations and standing strong behind Bush after September 11. In those dark and desperate days, Daschle even earned a public hug from Bush on national television. But in November 2001, Daschle successfully blocked a Bush-backed "economic stimulus" bill which would have, among other things, given a quarter billion dollar tax cut to Enron.

Bush was mad. Just after Thanksgiving 2001, he directed his staff to attack Daschle publicly; shortly thereafter, everyone from Ari Fleischer to the *National Review* to the editorial page of *The Washington Times* pushed the White House line that Daschle was an "obstructionist." Rush Limbaugh did them one better: on his radio show, he started calling the Senate Majority Leader "Puff Daschle" and "El Diablo." The GOP attack machine funded aggressive, anti-Daschle ads in South Dakota—an unprecedented direct assault by a president against a sitting leader of the Senate. One particularly egregious ad, which complained that Daschle's opposition to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve threatened our national security, featured a photograph of Daschle next to one of Saddam Hussein.

Who will be the next unlucky enemy targeted under a second Bush term? I'd put my money on any Democratic swing-state legislator who seeks to accommodate him. Moderates like Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) and Max Baucus (D-Mont.) might feel an even greater political imperative to accommodate Bush on his second-term agenda—from further tax cuts to privatizing social security—but if history is any guide, he will simply pocket their support and then viciously attack them. That, after all, was the fate of former Sen. Max Cleland who supported Bush's tax cuts and the war in Iraq. All he got for his goodwill was a ruthless general election campaign engineered by the national GOP on behalf of Saxby Chambliss, who ended up taking Cleland's seat after attack ads charged that the Vietnam triple amputee was soft on national security.

If Democrats are smart, they will instead steal a page from the playbooks of Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and the late senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.). In the midst of tough midterm election challenges in heavily contested swing-states, both politicians stood up to Bush. Although the GOP attack machine whirred into action, it sputtered and failed against Harkin and Wellstone. Even voters who disagreed with them on some issues admired their independence. Harkin won his race easily, and Wellstone was well out in front when he died in a plane crash. Their toughness should provide a model to other targeted Democrats, even in states with split constituencies: In modern politics, as in war, there's simply nothing to be gained by accommodating the enemy.

Bush sees the world in black and white. You're either for him or against him; a saint or a sinner; a friend or a foe. If given four more years in the White House, there's little doubt that the politics of retribution and bitter partisanship will dominate every day. ◆

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Bush Becomes a Moderate, Really

By Mickey Edwards and Nancy Sinnott Dwight

Despite his frequent talk of "compassionate conservatism" and a promised commitment to an expansive domestic agenda, George W. Bush's first term in the White House has been shaped by war and deep partisan divisions that often made him seem as if he were Ronald Reagan's son, pursuing ambitious if controversial goals, rather than the son of George H.W. Bush, who was known, and sometimes ridiculed, for his lack of interest in what he called "the vision thing."

If the president were now rolling to the easy victory many predicted after the attacks of September 11, 2001, he likely would see his reelection as a validation of the conservative policies of his first term. Instead, this man, who has always taken pride in seeing himself as a kind, caring, and decent leader who worked easily with political opponents as governor of Texas, has found himself the target of deep and widespread anger. Thus, caught in the controversy of his decisions over war and taxes, President Bush will enter a second term viewing his reelection as a second chance, something voters denied his father in 1992, rather than a mandate for a socially conservative and singularly aggressive agenda.

President Bush's second-chance presidency will be his opportunity to shape his legacy through a mixture of optimism, vision, values, and opportunity. The man who campaigned for office as a "uniter, not a divider" is almost certain to make outreach—to domestic opponents and foreign critics alike—the modus operandi of term two. While he is unlikely to shift dramatically from his conviction that threats to national security must be met head on, the last half of 2004 included efforts at personal diplomacy that are vaguely reminiscent of his father's attempts at coalition building prior to the first Gulf War. As the war in Iraq began to drag on, with U.S. casualties mounting and costs rising rapidly, Bush met repeatedly with world leaders to seek greater international participation in the reconstruction of the country and urged the United Nations to take a bigger role than it had yet been willing to assume. Notably absent from those meetings—even meetings with his counterparts in France and Germany—was the kind of muscular and almost bullying rhetoric the president had used during the buildup to the war. In Iraq itself, the United States took a backstage role, at least publicly, letting Iraqis become the public face of both the rebuilding effort and the campaign to destroy the Iraqi rebels trying to disrupt the transition to a democratic government. If one trait marked the president's behavior during the latter months of 2004, it was a decidedly uncharacteristic restraint, far more reminiscent of his father's style than of the style he himself had displayed at the war's outset. That, rather than the foreign-policy attitude his critics had condemned as arrogance, will likely mark a second term.

On the domestic front, Bush will reclaim the unrealized goals of his first four years—and in this will succeed where his father did not. President George H.W. Bush put forth comprehensive programs for a host of domestic issues—plans to reform our education and health-care systems and programs to inspire citizens to public service. The Gulf War diverted his attention (sound familiar?) and afterwards, his advisors persuaded him to put his preferred agenda on hold until after his presumed reelection. The current President Bush came into office determined not to repeat the sad history of his father's administration, but his domestic goals, too, got lost in the consuming fires of combat. Given a second chance, President Bush will demonstrate that compassionate conservatism has substance. He will commit his administration to inventive systemic reforms that in a true "take responsibility for yourself" Republican way, address education, tax policy, health care, and retirement.

President Bush's father had made education reform a prime goal of his presidency. "No Child Left Behind," this president's education initiative, was reminiscent of proposals that had been put forth by George H. W. Bush. And both plans met the same fate. With foreign policy dominating his presidency, George H.W. Bush saw his education goals fail to make it into policy. With the new war in Iraq eating up huge chunks of the federal treasury, this president's ambitious education programs have been forced to get by on far too few dollars. Reforming the country's school system would have been the centerpiece of the father's second term; it will be the centerpiece of his son's next four years.

President Bush will continue to deal with the constant threat of international terrorism, but like the Soviet threat of the 20th century, this issue will settle into its appropriate place in the policy lexicon of the Oval Office. (Presidents have lived and dealt with threat before. Franklin Roosevelt even found time to pursue an aggressive domestic agenda—thanks in part to pressure from his wife—in the midst of World War II.) Even his way of fighting the war on terror will come to resemble the approach taken by his father. The first President Bush, a war hero himself, understood the value of military force, but he was, above all, a negotiator, a coalition-builder, a

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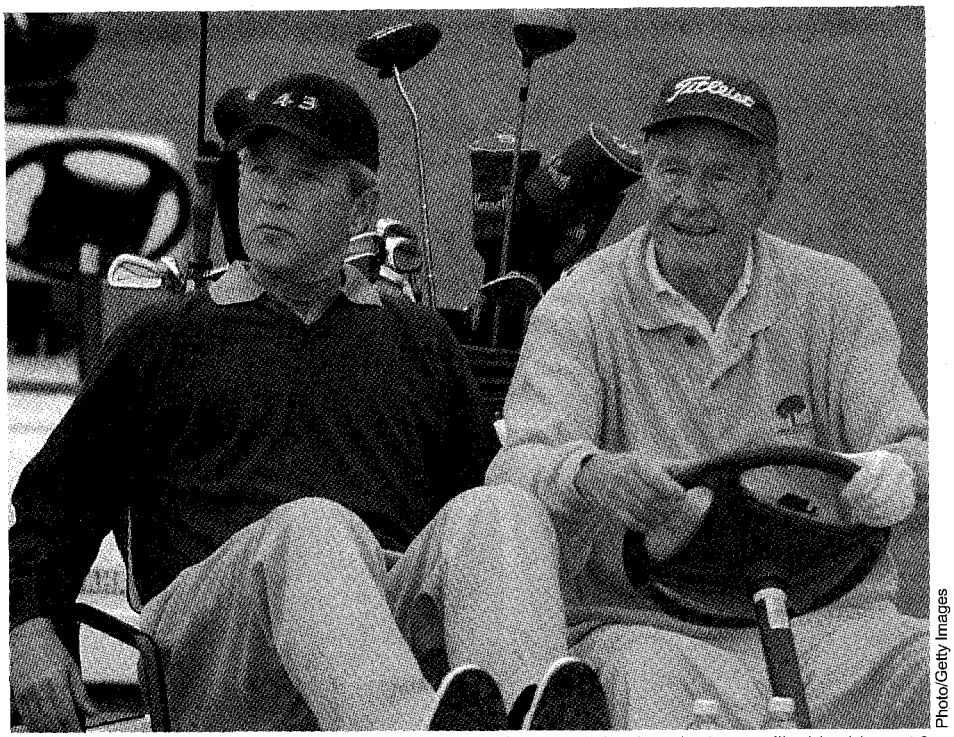
man who saw national security issues as multi-dimensional, involving diplomacy, foreign assistance, and the proverbial struggle "for the hearts and minds" of potential adversaries. Faced with the need to use force in places like Kuwait and Somalia, the first President Bush focused intently not only on how to get the military in, but also on how to get it out.



Photo/Getty Images

In another four years, will Bush's agenda begin to look more like his old man's?

This president, confronting a different kind of challenge after the attacks of September 11 and believing that Saddam Hussein posed the potential for yet another such attack, responded quickly and militarily, first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq. The result has been division in America, hostility abroad, and while the president will continue to believe he acted as he had to, he will respond to future crises much as his father did, with military force being not the only, or first, option. This second-chance president will step with more caution before he leads the country into further battles, and will devote considerable energy to reforming the intelligence and defense apparatus in Washington.

There is no way of knowing, of course, whether the president's approach toward the terrorist threat might have changed if he had retained the popularity he enjoyed in the early days after September 11 or in the aftermath of congressional authorization to go to war in Iraq. But if Bush wins reelection, it will be because many of his voters found John Kerry a lesser alternative and were willing to give President Bush and his agenda a second chance, even though many questioned his management of the war in Iraq.

Do not look for Donald Rumsfeld or John Ashcroft to dominate a second Bush presidency as they have the first. Do not look for President Bush to hurl more flowers (such as the proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage) at the feet of those who proclaim themselves to be spokesmen for American conservatives. Having found the voters willing to let him try again, George W. Bush will respond with a presidency that will make him more popular when it ends than when it began. ◆

The Left Learns from Goldwater

By Todd Gitlin

If George W. Bush wins a second term, it is likely that whatever factors will have moved swing voters into his column will also suffice to keep Republicans in control of both houses of Congress. Progressives, who had banded together with Democratic centrists in an unprecedented and deeply felt display of unity, will then be faced with a choice whose importance is hard to underestimate.

They can decide that candidate Kerry lost because he did not commit fully enough to liberal principles, and turn their backs on coalition-building. But this would be

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unwise. The crucial divide will be between those who understand it's the infrastructure, stupid, and those who don't.

Those in the Democratic camp and the rational liberal-left who believe in long-term institutional politics should conclude that they could not possibly have compensated for 30-plus years of right-wing base-building with one year's fever of anti-Bush resolve. They should, like the Republican Party after the Goldwater cataclysm of 1964, sigh, shudder, mourn—and organize. They'll pick themselves up and get back to work building their start-up think tanks and media and Internet networks, from the Center for American Progress through Air America Radio through MoveOn.org and various 527 soft money distributors, all of which, despite starting late, made up for a good deal of Democratic organizational weakness in 2004.

That is, if they're smart. The post-Goldwater Republicans were smart. Despite what looked like a calamity, they didn't bolt from the GOP. They didn't break off as a third party, though some of them dearly wanted to. Will the rebellious left discipline itself, cool its boiling blood, and decide that the pleasures of sectarianism are worth less than the steady resolve of infrastructural work?

The institution-builders in and around the Democratic Party will pull out all stops to urge the activists who mobilized against Bush to throw themselves back into action—continuing to mobilize against Bush's judicial nominations, which will remain blockable; into the congressional and senatorial races of 2006; into local and statewide party campaigns where political machines are built and alliances refined. I see no reason why the center and left of the Democrats should differ over the necessity of all these objectives.

Both wings will open their political eyes. A desolate January 2005 will be an occasion for generational succession. The post-Goldwater Republicans found their next hero in Goldwater's most eloquent backer, Ronald Reagan, with their moneymen building him up for a gubernatorial run in 1966. Perhaps the Democrats will find—may have already found—their Reagan in Barack Obama. If the DLC is smart, it will also look to a new generation of leaders—maybe Obama can be their man, too.

The mobilized base—from MoveOn.org and the Deaniacs on rightward—will probably split. There will, of course, be divisions on policy—Medicare, foreign policy, and so on. But more important will be the tension between those who believe in building infrastructure and those who think the party's malaise can be cured overnight by the right (i.e., left) man or woman on the right horse.

Many of the young go-for-broke voters, having failed to change the world in their first electoral outing, will be tempted to paint themselves into a gaudy Naderite corner. Nader himself will offend some of them away with some combination of gloating and what-me-responsible? shrugs—but not all. As after Humphrey's defeat of 1968, some of the far left will yield to fury, sullenness, and despair. The Greens will recruit.

Many Democrats who spent months reveling in desperate unity will crash. They will have clenched their teeth, made nice, and learned how to be center-left. Not only will they have simulated this at their convention in July, they will have become that precious thing, a party that is—as it must be—a coalition. And all for what? Another defeat.

George Bush will have stamped his foot, snapped out his talking points and barking phrases, and accomplished his mission on the basis of a record farther right than any in a generation. Realism will be dead in the Republican Party and they will have won in its absence. The Republicans' center of gravity will continue to rest on the double fantasy of supply-side economics (Dick Cheney: "Reagan showed that deficits don't matter") and war at will.

Lieberman centrists (of the DLC & Co.) and Kennedy liberals (of Americans Coming Together & Co.) will gnash their teeth, gnaw on each other, blame Kerry (for going too far left, for not going far enough left, for lacking luster, for misunderestimating Bush, you name it). Then, one morning, if they're smart, they'll all wake up and realize they've all missed a stupendous opportunity and they had better roll up their sleeves, consult their demographic oracles, and become institution-builders.

Make no mistake: None of this will be easy, and the forces for coalition will be tested. Most Democrats will likely be in a tizzy for a while after the re-election. But if they are smart enough, they will satisfy themselves initially with small, slow steps. Congressional Democrats of all ideological stripes will fight bill by bill, try to stop one judicial appointment at a time. They will not be so quick to sign a blank check for war with Iran or North Korea as they were in Iraq. And they will still lose many battles.

Many activists, novices and veterans, will despair, or wrestle with despair. They will entertain wild, secessionist fantasies, or claim they're on the verge of moving to old Europe. Morosely, they will remind themselves that Republicans have triumphed after the grandest Democratic-liberal mobilization in decades. They will lack a theory of history that injects them with confidence that, despite defeat, the wheel will eventually turn their way.

So, politics altogether will seem to be blocked. Dropouts will multiply. In this overheated atmosphere, I would not be surprised to see outbursts of political violence the likes of which we haven't seen since the Weather Underground of the 1970s. The commitment to marginality in much of the antiglobalization movement would take on a tang of negative logic. The master argument will sound like this: What else you got, you so-called practical types?

The practical types had better be practical. ◆

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The Deficit Conquers All

By Sebastian Mallaby

Ronald Reagan promised tax cuts in his 1980 campaign, and delivered in his first year in the White House. After that, however, Reagan turned around, raising taxes three times during his term in office. For those who now contemplate a second Bush term, the Reagan story holds out hope. Won't the budget deficit, compounded by the approach of baby boomer retirement, compel Bush to reconsider his love affair with tax cuts?

It's possible. But most of what we've seen from Bush thus far suggests it isn't likely. The president has elevated consistency above most other governing virtues: His attack on Kerry as a flip-flopper reflects his own peculiar brand of unapologetic policy rigidity. Bush shows no signs of dropping any member of the foreign policy team that led him to alienate allies, botch the postwar planning in Iraq, misconstrue intelligence on weapons of mass destruction, and permit the abuses of Abu Ghraib. Likewise, he shows no sign of rethinking his ambition to make his first-term tax cuts permanent, especially since his father paid a political price for reneging on his tax commitment.

To the contrary, indeed, the best guess is that Bush won't merely seek to make his tax cuts permanent. He will actually want new ones. His has already proposed new tax breaks for retirement savings, and he favors tax-sheltered health savings accounts. It seems inevitable that a president from either party will want to "fix" the Alternative Minimum Tax, a device that prevents high earners from claiming too many deductions. Perish the thought that the well-off should raise their kids without the help of tax deductions from the government.

If this is the likely shape of tax policy in a second term, how will history judge the Bush presidency? Some early reviews are already available: "Past administrations from the time of Alexander Hamilton have on the average run responsible budgetary policies," says the Nobel laureate George Akerlof. "What we have here is a form of looting." Is that judgment going to stand? The more you consider the country's options, the more Akerlof appears to be on target.

To see why this is so, consider the following thought experiment. Assume that a second-term Bush will stick to his tax cuts, and then ask: Is there something, anything, that can possibly be done to stop future deficits from exploding?

The Bush administration's stock answer to this question can be dispensed with quickly. Officials declare their solemn intent to restrain government spending, but their record suggests the opposite. President Bush has presided over an explosion of spending not just on defense and homeland security, but in other areas, too. He has signed into law an enormous subsidy program for farmers; he has increased foreign aid by 50 percent; he has participated in the creation of a Medicare drug entitlement. Some of these programs are deserving, to be sure. But the Bush promise to restrain spending simply isn't credible, especially since the president has never once wielded his veto pen to block Congressional pork-barreling.

The next way the Bush administration claims to be able to address the deficit is to reform Social Security. Let's be generous, now: We'll set aside the fact that Bush ignored the various reform proposals put forward by his own Social Security advisory commission, judging the topic too politically hot to handle. Let's assume that, in a second term, Bush acquires a burst of reformist courage on Social Security. What impact is that likely to have on the nation's budget outlook?

There are two answers. In the short term and even the medium term, a shift to private retirement accounts would increase the budget deficit, since the government would have to carry on paying existing retirees while forgoing the Social Security contributions of younger workers, who will have opted out of the system. In the longer term, meaning after 2048, by the administration's own calculations, real savings are possible, because the money in private retirement accounts can be invested in equities, which tend to earn decent returns over the long term. That investment income represents money to finance retirement that isn't available now. Whatever the disadvantages of private accounts—notably, that they transfer investment risk onto individuals—the Bush administration can fairly claim that privatization would improve the long-term budget outlook.

How big is this effect, though? Surprisingly small, is the answer. According to a study by Alan Auerbach of Berkeley and Peter Orszag and William Gale of the Brookings Institution, the budget deficit is likely to grow from about 4 percent of GDP at the moment to around 20 percent in 2040. But the cost of social security will expand from just 4.3 percent of GDP to 6.5 percent. In other words, only a small fraction of the nation's looming fiscal disaster is due to Social Security.

If Social-Security reform is insufficient, what else could Bush do? The president's team makes much of his determination to boost economic growth, and (as the 1990s demon-

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strated) growth can certainly have a big impact on the budget. To give a rough measure of growth's fiscal potential, an extra 1 percentage point on the annual growth rate would cut the projected deficit in 2014 from around 3.5 percent of GDP to a far less alarming 0.5 percent, according to the Berkeley-Brookings calculations.

Generating that extra growth—which means boosting the economy's cruising speed from just under 3 percent growth a year to just under 4 percent—is going to be a tall order. The tax cuts, by themselves, are not going to do it. Although certain kinds of tax cuts do boost incentives to work hard, save more, and take entrepreneurial risks, all of which theoretically boost growth, tax cuts also tend to lower the government's savings rate, reducing the pool of capital available for investment and nudging up interest rates. A range of econometric studies suggest that these opposing effects—stronger work incentives on the one hand, higher interest rates on the other—roughly cancel each other out. A second-term Bush administration would therefore need to broaden its agenda to get the growth that might make the tax cuts seem retrospectively defensible.

There are, in principle at least, several policies that could boost growth. Fully liberalized global trade would create a boost to GDP of 2 percent, according to Harvard's Jeff Frankel, an alumnus of Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers. But this would be a one-time boost to the size of the economy, not a shift in the growth rate, so it would be too small to close more than a small part of the deficit forecast for 2014, and would make barely any impact in the years thereafter. In any case, free trade is not something that an American president can will into existence unilaterally. Even success in the current Doha round of trade talks would fall short of freeing trade completely.

Tort reform is another growth-promoting option. America's outrageous system, which transfers more than $100 billion into lawyers' pockets annually, slows growth in two ways: The expense of dealing with litigation consumes corporate funds that might otherwise go to innovation and research; and the fear of litigation causes companies to withhold products from the market, order safety tests that generate little useful information, and generally to dissipate their energies in defensive strategies that are more about reducing legal exposure than about genuine safety improvements. But how much extra growth might you get from tort reform, setting aside the problem that it would be unlikely to get through Congress? Robert Litan of Brookings Institution puts the answer at just 0.1 percent of GDP per year.

A similar verdict holds for regulatory reform, another policy that the administration has pushed quietly. Regulatory reform need not be an assault on air quality or safety or anything else of value; it can consist of weeding out expensive regulations that buy little benefit in terms of health and safety, and replacing these with others that are less burdensome and more effective. A smart benefit-cost review of the regulatory state could reduce the drag on businesses without harming citizens. But though this yields some effect on the growth rate, it isn't dramatic.

What of boosting government investment in education and research spending? More education is certainly a good idea. As the journalist Daniel Altman writes in *Neoconomy*, his book on the Bush economics philosophy, the verdict of the economics profession is that an extra year in a four-year college can raise a worker's future wages by 5 to 10 percent, more than paying for the cost of the tuition. But the fiscal pay-off from this strategy is limited, because the government will only capture a third of the worker's extra earnings in taxes. Equally, government-funded research can generate growth-enhancing breakthroughs from biotechnology to the Internet, and more might be a good idea. But the link between extra spending and extra breakthroughs is unpredictable. It seems unwise to bet the nation's fiscal future on it.

The bottom line is that higher growth is possible, and would have a real fiscal pay-off; but government has no certain way of boosting the growth rate enough to make its tax cuts look retrospectively defensible. As information technology revolutionized American business during the 1990s, economists did revise their view of the economy's potential growth substantially upward: Whereas productivity increased at 1.5 percent a year in the first half of the 1990s, it increased at 2.5 percent in the second half. But the Internet revolution probably won't be matched any time soon, and policies such as tort reform or regulatory reform come nowhere close to it. Moreover, it would take a further jump of more than 1 percent to fix the vast deficits that loom in 2040 and onward.

If neither Social-Security reform nor pro-growth government policy are likely to rescue the Bush budget policy, what is there left? The answer is health care. Between now and 2040, on the Berkeley-Brookings projections, federal spending on Medicare and Medicaid will grow by over 6 percent of GDP, nearly three times the size of jump as Social Security faces.

A large chunk of this projected health care spending reflects inefficiencies in the U.S. system. The nation spends 15 percent of GDP on health, 6 percentage points more than the average rich economy; and yet Americans do not live any longer. Within this country, some states manage to spend twice as much per Medicare patient as other states spend--again, without any improvement in health outcomes. Elliott Fisher of Dartmouth University reckons that, if the efficiency of the best-run fifth of the nation could be matched by every region, Medicare spending would drop by 30 percent. Similar savings might be achievable in the private health system, which would help the government's finances as well. Medical insurance is provided by companies to employees on a tax-free basis, so efficiencies that squeeze money out of health into other parts of the economy increase the tax take.

Health care clearly offers bigger deficit-closing opportunities than Social-Security reform or pro-growth policies. But are these opportunities enough to rescue Bush's fiscal legacy? If the Medicare spending projected in 2040 were cut by 30 percent, the savings would come to just over 2 percent of GDP; the tax flow-through from new private-sector health efficiency might bring that up to a total of 3 percent. But that is the equivalent of just under a fifth of the total deficit projected in 2040, and it assumes that the political system showed

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more grit in tackling the medical-industrial complex than it has hitherto exhibited. Moreover, squeezing inefficiencies out of health care would likely not prevent the tendency of health costs to rise faster than GDP. The steep rise in health care spending is driven overwhelmingly by new technologies. We are not going to stop wanting the benefits of new kinds of care, so health spending will carry on rising rapidly.

In short, the thought experiment points to some pretty stark conclusions. Even if you assume improbable amounts of political courage in a second Bush term, the chances that the administration could come up with something dramatic enough to forestall fiscal disaster are between modest and zero.

The basic premise of the tax cuts—that the size of government can and should be contained—is ahistorical and wrong. Ahistorical, because government's share of GDP has in fact grown steadily as societies have grown richer over the past century. Wrong, because government in the age of the baby bust is going inevitably to grow. Bush has failed to understand where history is headed, and history will judge him harshly for it. ◆

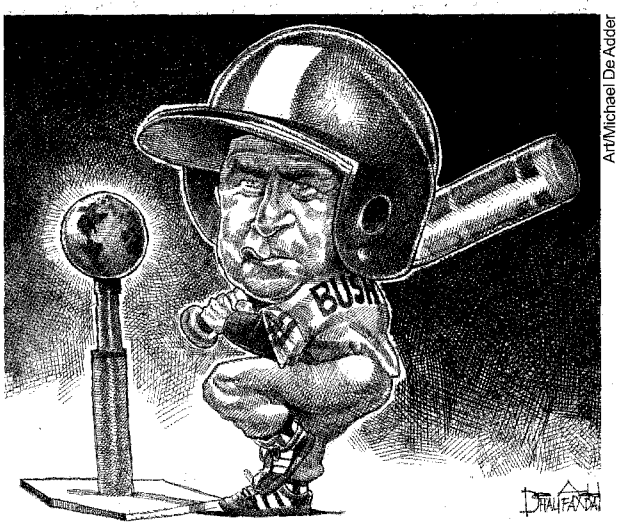
W. Takes on Global Warming

By Gregg Easterbrook

Second-term presidents traditionally turn their thoughts to history. Of the two most recently reelected presidents, Ronald Reagan in his second term became interested in nuclear-arms reduction treaties with the Soviet Union, in part because they could make him a historic president; Bill Clinton's thoughts of history were postponed by the Monica mess but, by his final year in office, he was trying desperately to solve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. If George W. Bush is reelected, how future historians remember him may become a White House concern. There remains a chance that history will come to regard the invasion of Iraq as a liberation and a progressive turning point in Arab society, but the odds are greater the invasion will be pronounced a colossal folly. A reelected Bush, if he wants to win favor with historians, will have to do something impressive, statesmanlike, and out of character.

Which is why I think a second-term Bush will be the president who imposes global-warming controls.

The scientific case for concern over an artificial greenhouse effect becomes stronger every year. To cite one of many indicators, a few months ago Thomas Karl, director of the federal National Climatic Data Center and once a leading greenhouse skeptic, declared that "anthropogenic climate change is now likely," with impacts "quite disruptive" to agriculture and global economics. Of all nations, only Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Slovenia have meaningful greenhouse-gas reduction standards, and even if these prove successful,



Art/Michael De Adder

Will Bush score a political homerun by protecting the environment?

the aggregate mass of the nations imposing them is not sufficient to have more than a negligible impact on the overall problem. The United States is both the number-one source of artificially generated greenhouse gases, and the number-one source of economic and technological change—meaning we are both most responsible for the problem, and the most likely to solve it. The sooner the United States puts its shoulder against the global warming threat, the better for the world.

Now consider where George W. Bush will stand in a second term. As a Republican, he is expected to be opposed to environmental regulations. (Actually the EPA was founded under Richard Nixon, the Clean Air Act was made much stronger under George H. W. Bush in 1990, and George W. Bush has strengthened rules to reduce smog, but that's another issue.) Bush's natural constituency is the petroleum industry, so he would be expected not to regulate his oil pals. (Petroleum products are the second-leading cause of artificial greenhouse

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gases, coal the first.) Whichever U.S. president imposes the initial round of greenhouse reforms will be admired by historians. If a Republican oil-industry president is the first to do this, playing against type, historians may be deeply impressed.

There's your opening, second-term George W. Bush. Be the man who is not afraid to face the threat of global warming. ◆

The Roquefort Cheese Wars

By Christopher Buckley

Why does the question "What if he wins?" sound, in this context, so ominous, as if it were the title of a big-screen disaster movie? Portent of tsunami and a frozen-over Manhattan?

W2 is not a terribly encouraging prospect. I say this as a loyal but dispirited Republican who will probably hold his nose on election day and pull the Republican lever. Every time I contemplate voting for Kerry—and I have—I consider the consequences, chiefly among them an even more insufferable Michael Moore, thumping his kettle drum chest and claiming credit for having changed the course of history. This is too dreary to contemplate.

But to answer the question, let me paraphrase Betty Davis: Fasten your seat belts, kids, we're in for a bumpy second term.

The present political atmosphere is so partisan, mutually suspicious, and antagonistic who, really, would be surprised to wake up the day after the election to the news that recounts were being demanded in all 50 states, by both sides? Or even in Guam, where, as we relearn every four years, America's day begins?

This will not be a pretty spectacle, or healthy for the republic. The last election took 35 days to settle. This time, it could conceivably take longer. Maybe it would make sense to move Inauguration Day back to its previous March 4 slot.

But let's say Bush does squeak through with a little luck—paging James Baker—and a Sandra Day O'Connor deus ex machina. What, as Robert Redford said at the end of *The Candidate*, do we do now?

Second terms are not notorious for being successful. Eisenhower, LBJ (if you consider '64-'68 a second term), Nixon, Reagan, Clinton—would any of them consider their second helping a triumph? And their approval ratings, going in, were generally higher than Bush's. It's hard to find many, even in the most vermilion parts of the red states, who are deep down, in their heart of hearts, ardent for George W. Bush. Among the rock-ribbed, one does not hear enthusiastic cries of "Encore! Encore!" (We of the Republican persuasion tend to lapse into French at times of excitement—a legacy, sans doute, of attending fancy boarding schools.)

Assuming Bush stays the course—as we used to say during Reagan's first term—then from the point of view of a traditional (that is, pre-compassionate) conservatism, the prospects seem pretty bleak: quagmire in Iraq; a series of petty trade wars with old Europe involving Roquefort cheese; feckless attempts to placate congressmen by levying and then rescinding tariffs; bigger government (while decrying the growth thereof); a military stretched wafer-thin; toleration of failure at the CIA and FBI, while paying lip service to the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission; the further decline of American prestige abroad; and most ominously of all, a plunge in visa applications by native French speakers. Who, then, will teach America's future leaders the language at the fancy boarding schools? This is a crisis that cannot be ignored much longer.

Bush is a conspicuous Christian, but he is not on the whole given to conspicuous displays of one of the chief Christian virtues: humility. It would become him, should the Almighty bestow on him the grace of another term in office, to manifest some. Nothing so extreme as showing up at cabinet meetings wearing an itchy hair shirt, or even bowing and scraping before the (old) Europeans—something Kerry seems impatient to start doing—but a little frank chin-wag with the nation from the Oval Office about how he realizes that things did not turn out in Iraq as well as he had hoped; that the "mission" is not yet "accomplished," that four-hundred-billion-dollar deficits are not desirable; and that if the Congress sends him one more squealing, oinking pork-laden, budget-busting bill, he is going to veto it. He might, too, in the same talk even extend a hand to old Europe, saying that while America cannot ask permission of its friends to defend itself when it is truly threatened, but that it also understands that as what's-his-name, the poet guy, put it: No country is an island.

Another Republican president, in his second inaugural, talked of binding up the nation's wounds. Not a bad text. Not a bad way to reboot. ◆

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Decline of American Greatness

By Elaine Kamarck

At the root of all power is wealth. With sufficient wealth a country can afford a strong military while still making the domestic investments (in roads, schools, medical care, scientific research, etc.) that keep citizens productive and the economic pie expanding. High taxes choke off growth, but so do high deficits. Living off your credit cards is as bad for your country as it is for your family. In the long run, there is simply no way around it—bad fiscal policy is bad economic policy, and a threat to a nation's power.

Most American presidents have understood this. Ronald Reagan raised taxes to quell the mounting deficits caused by his previous tax cuts and defense increases. Further budget discipline by Reagan's successors, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, left America at the end of the 20th century with a booming economy, unrivaled military and diplomatic power, and revenue surpluses.

Then along came George W. Bush.

In one term, he has wiped away one of the Republican Party's most appealing characteristics—its concern for fiscal discipline. Bush and his advisers firmly believed that taxes should go only and always in one direction: down. And they were determined to exploit America's military dominance more fully. Neither the recession of 2001-2003, which drained away much of the surplus, nor the 9/11 attacks altered this view. Instead of focusing our military and diplomatic resources on al Qaeda and Afghanistan, the president chose to invade Iraq without broad international support and against the advice of much of the national-security establishment. Instead of reversing the tax cuts or even raising taxes, as all previous presidents had done in wartime (and most patriotic Americans would probably have supported), Bush continued to cut them. And instead of imposing spending discipline, the president allowed the GOP-controlled Congress to abandon the "pay-as-you-go" budget principles revived by his father and failed to veto even the most pork-ridden spending measures.

These reckless fiscal and military policies are destined to undercut America's wealth and power for years to come, regardless of who wins in November. But if Bush garners a second term, we could be in for something far worse: the beginning of the end of American greatness.

No amount of dire warnings or severe criticisms dissuaded the president from pursuing reckless fiscal and military policies in his first term. Therefore he is unlikely to suddenly change his mind if the plurality of voters validate those policies by supporting him in November. He will no doubt interpret a second term as a mandate to make their tax cuts permanent and, in all probability, to reduce to zero taxes on capital gains.

How, then, will he respond when the deficits skyrocket even more? In three ways, none of which inspire confidence.

First, he will try to reintroduce the "reform" agenda he began in his first term but largely put aside. This agenda, as more than one Democrat has pointed out, is really about unraveling social insurance. From privatization of Social Security to tort reform to Health Savings Accounts to a variety of innocent sounding changes to small business—what holds the Bush reform agenda together is a desire to undo the social safety net. These changes would further undercut the middle class and put our future at risk as health and education outcomes deteriorated for more and more people.

In a second Bush term, however, Democrats will not be as shell-shocked as they were in the first two years of the first George W. Bush administration, and they will block most of Bush's reform agenda. Professor William A. Galston, a veteran of the Clinton White House and many Democratic campaigns says, "I can't imagine that Democrats will do business with Republicans after WMD, No Child Left Behind, prescription drugs, etc." A second-term Bush administration, then, would probably be no more able to enact radical changes to social programs than the first one was.

The next option to control spiraling deficits would be to enact large budge cuts across the board. This would wipe out many discretionary spending programs and push all sorts of costs—Medicaid, juvenile delinquency, mental illness, and education for starters—down to the local level. Property taxes would either rise way too quickly creating a middle class

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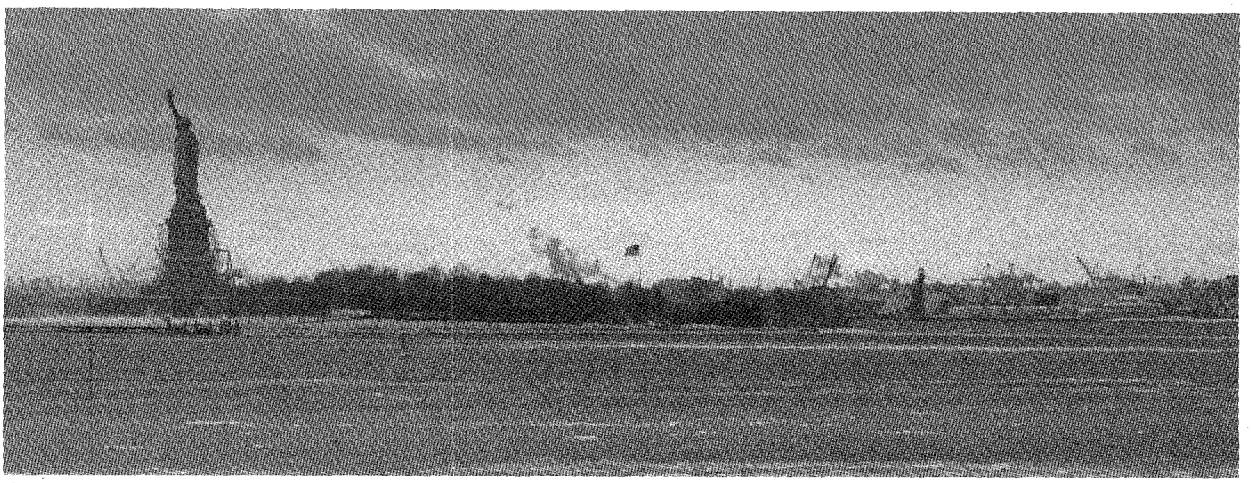

The sun sets on New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty on a winter night, January 2004

revolt—or governors and mayors would hold the line and radically cut services for the most disadvantaged. The political fallout from these severe cuts in social spending would be enormous—which is why no Republican, from Newt Gingrich to George Bush, has ever been able to make big cuts in the programs they claim to dislike so much. Thus, it is highly unlikely that a second-term George Bush could create cuts in spending sufficient to do something significant about the deficit.

That leaves option number three: Carry on the tradition of the first term and simply assert that massive spending cuts are not needed because tax cuts will be sufficient to grow our way out of the deficits. But robust economic growth eluded the Bush team for most of his first term. Job creation has been slow and the recovery halting—giving rise to great cynicism about George Bush's campaign claim to have "turned the corner."

In a second term, growth will be even more elusive because it will be affected by something the American presidency has no control over: the accelerating growth of the gargantuan Chinese economy driving up global demand for oil. The rate of growth in global demand for which will have doubled by the end of 2005 in just one decade compared to the rate of growth in the 22-year period before it. Demand-driven increasing energy costs will not go away. Expensive energy makes everything we make and buy and drive expensive, too. And yet the Bush administration can't see beyond oil. I don't buy into the conspiracy theories of the left, that Bush and company are out for the oil money. But it is clear to me that the mindset of oil men is totally inadequate to leading us out of an oil-dependent economy. If Bush is reelected, the failure to wean us from dependence on foreign oil will rank high in the reasons why the Bush administration presided over the beginning of the end of America's wealth.

In short, there are no signs that George Bush in a second term would be able to correct the fiscal mess he created in the first term. Moreover, the Bush deficits will run up against another looming financial crisis. Sometime in the decade after a second Bush term, the Social Security Trust Fund will begin to pay out more than it takes in. Everyone knows this is coming. Another Clinton era veteran, Rob Shapiro, predicts that by the end of the second term the market's horizon will begin to take in the Social Security and Medicare crisis. With huge additional spending burdens in the context of a huge deficit, the capital markets will presume that Washington policymakers will take one of two economically detrimental paths: inflate their way out of the bind or raise taxes. One Wall Street Democrat predicts a 25-basis-point increase in interest rates every three months well into the future.

By the end of a second Bush term, our nation will be poorer, and poor nations have trouble leading the world. So do nations that no one believes. Preemption is not necessarily a flawed strategy; it is only flawed if the judgment about the immediacy of the threat is wrong. The public, the press, and the Democratic Party—all of whom gave the president the benefit of the doubt on Iraq—will be hyper critical and suspicious of further claims that some nation is about to do us harm. The failure to find WMD and the suspicions aroused by recent announcements of "new" terror threats that turn out to be three years old are beginning to have a boy-who-cried-wolf effect. Who will believe President Bush when he tries to mobilize the country to go to war against an aggressive and nuclear Iran? Or an out of control Kim Jong Il?

Once devalued, trust is hard to regain. Even a President John Kerry will face suspicion if he finds that he has to take the country to war. But no one will face suspicion the way a second-term President Bush will and that could lead us into a situation where we don't fight when we should.

America started the 21st century with great wealth, great power, and great moral authority in the world. But in the blink of an eye, Bush took us from budget surpluses to budget deficits, from a military that was feared to a military that is exhausted and stretched to the breaking point, and from a country that could lead the world to a country that invokes

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suspicion at home and abroad. We are at the beginning of what may be a long war on terror. This means that we need all aspects of our power—our military power, our economic power, and our moral power—in tact. Bush has squandered all of them in his first term. We can't afford a second term. ◆

America Gets Privatized

By E.J. Dionne

What would President Bush do with a second term? Let's take him at his word. Bush is engaged in a bold (and, if you disagree with him, dangerous) project to dismantle the social advances of the New and Fair Deals, the New Frontier, and the Great Society. He wants to throw more risk onto the individual, free corporations and employers from regulations that protect employees and consumers, and reduce government's role in providing retirement security. He would further cut taxes on the savings and investments of the well-off and weaken the individual's right to sue corporations and heath-care providers for malfeasance.

Or, to put this same list in Bush's terms, he wants to "empower" individuals, end "junk law suits," expand "incentives" for investment, give the elderly "ownership of their retirement," and free businesses from "unnecessary" regulation. A second Bush term would be a big deal, if not necessarily a fair one. I write these words before the president has spoken to his national convention, where his aides promise he will lay out his new ambitions. But he's already told us a lot about where he wants to go.

He proposed partially privatizing Social Security in the 2000 election campaign, and has stuck to his position. He'd take a couple of percentage points off payroll taxes that now go the Social Security fund and allow individuals to invest the amount in private accounts. The transition costs of the plan—because Bush has also promised to allow those at or near retirement to stay in the current system—would amount to about $1 trillion. Retirement costs would have to be covered, even as revenues were cut by the privatization scheme. It's not clear where Bush would find the money, though he could just add to the deficit.

On Medicare, Bush would like to replace the current system that guarantees all seniors the medical treatment they need with fixed payments to subsidize the purchase of private insurance. He has not quite said this explicitly, but this is the direction in which his rhetoric (and his conservative allies) have pointed. For the wealthy, this program would be fine; they could supplement government subsidies with their own funds. The non-wealthy would be stuck with a guaranteed minimum. This would be sold as "choice." But under the current system, seniors actually can choose their doctors and treatments. The only "choice" guaranteed by partial privatization of Medicare would be among health-insurance companies or HMOs. Which is the "choice" that health-care consumers really want?

The cuts in taxes on savings and investment Bush is likely to seek would mark yet another step in transferring taxation from wealth to work—from investors to wage earners. An ever larger share of government revenue would come from payroll and income taxes. Bush sees this as encouraging investment.

The president is also talking about "flextime." It sounds good. Individuals could cash in overtime pay for time off. But this is also a way to weaken laws guaranteeing that those who work more than 40 hours a week get paid time and a half for their extra hours. That's why employers love the flextime idea. Yes, there may be useful ways to encourage more flexibility in the time/money tradeoff. But can one count on an administration that dislikes regulation of business to guarantee that workers would not be pressured to give up the overtime pay they are now entitled to?

Bush will present these ideas under the appealing slogan of an "ownership society." An ownership society is a great idea. It's the very thing that unions sought: Pushing up wages allowed individuals to own their own homes and send their kids to college. The GI Bill, student loans, Pell Grants, Head Start, minimum wages—all were and are designed to help individuals gain the skills, income, and power to become self-sufficient owners. Reducing government help and protection for wage earners and senior citizens is likely to retard the goal of an "ownership society."

Would the planks of this Bush program be passed? As long as Democrats hold at least 45 seats in the Senate—they are likely to win at least several more than that, perhaps even a majority—much of this Bush agenda will be stillborn. But you never know. Enough Democrats caved in to Bush on his tax-cut proposals to make them law. Maybe the privatized world Bush seeks could happen if Democrats are intimidated by his reelection. That makes the outcome of November's presidential vote very important. ◆

E. J. Dionne is the author of *Stand Up, Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps and the Politics of Revenge* (Simon & Schuster, 2004), a Washington Post Writers Group columnist, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a professor at Georgetown University.

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The Glorious Revolution: A Look Back

By Jeff Greenfield

As imagined spontaneously and simultaneously by Michael Moore, Whoopi Goldberg, Paul Krugman, and a majority of residents of Manhattan's Upper West Side.

July 2008. Looking back on the progress we've made these last few years, it is hard to remember that it all began in the depths of despair.

Four years ago, it seemed clear that even the most desperate of measures by Karl Rove and company would not save President Bush from defeat. Though the astonishing events of the third debate—Vice President Dick Cheney emerging from the wings dragging a humbled and repentant Osama bin Laden by the scruff of his neck—had given the Bush campaign a badly-needed boost, things had taken a turn for the worse following news of Halliburton's no-bid contract to drill for oil in the soon-to-be-privatized National Parks. Kerry was well on his way to amassing a three-million-vote edge in the popular contest when the networks announced razor-thin Bush victories in Florida and Ohio, giving the incumbent a two-vote margin in the electoral college. Though Democrats demanded a recount in the latter following Bush's remarkable 93 percent showing among Cincinnati's Diebold-equipped polling precincts, they were stymied by yet another 5-4 vote in the Supreme Court, featuring Justice Scalia's novel "original intent" interpretation of the Constitution's equal protection clause. ("Surely the Founding Fathers would have thought it unthinkable that a candidate such as Sen. Kerry could hold the presidency; and since the Constitution is an admirable example of rational thought, it thus follows that what is unthinkable must be unconstitutional. It is thus unconstitutional for Sen. Kerry to assume the White House. Justice Clarence Thomas, in his concurring opinion, opined "What he said.")

In the wake of this disaster, however, lay the seeds of the glorious events that were to follow. First came what we now call The Great Trek North. For years, such prominent liberals as Alec Baldwin had warned that, should Bush be reelected, they would leave the country. Past promises regarding Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush had, of course, gone unfulfilled—but this time, it turned out, they meant it. In the weeks after Bush's reelection, a trickle of prominent Americans relocated to Canada; as the creative community experience firsthand Canada's more liberal social welfare policies—and how much farther American currency went up north than it did at home—the trickle became a mighty flood. From P. Diddy to Willie Nelson, from Ben Affleck to Rob Reiner, from Chris Rock to Larry David, from Steven Spielberg to Adam Sorkin, from pundits to new economy titans, from academics to artists, the greatest thinkers and creators of our age took up residence in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver.

An intemperate response by the new attorney general, former Alabama judge Roy Moore, only made things worse: By closing the border to all imports from "the new deserters"—including all movies, TV shows, records, and books—the Bush administration deprived Americans of their favorite diversions, and left the entire entertainment industry in the hands of Bush supporters. The Joan Rivers-hosted "Daily Show" flopped, as did the "Spiderman" sequels produced and directed by Roger Ailes. (It turned out Al Franken didn't make a very good super-villain, especially in those tights.) The last straw appears to have been Moore's appointment of Sean Hannity as the first Government Authorized Standup Comedian. ("Why did the chicken cross the road? Because that's where the rest of the anti-war wimps were!") It wasn't long before even Jeff Foxworthy was endorsing Democrats for office.

Sports, too, fell under the heavy hand of the Bush administration. With every baseball game now required to include "God Bless America" every half inning, the time of the average game stretched to more than four hours, and attendance plummeted. When the new Secretary of Traditional Values, John Ashcroft, banned all tattoos and piercings, the NFL and NBA were crippled by strikes and rulebook slowdowns.

The result? Sweeping Democratic gains in the 2006 midterms that put both houses of Congress firmly in the hands of the opposition party. Impeachment proceedings against both Bush and Cheney were launched soon after, and by 2007, Speaker Nancy Pelosi had taken over as president. The prompt repatriation of America's cultural elite instantly put the federal budget into surplus, all but assuring that the Democratic ticket would sweep to victory. Of course, as I write this, the Democratic convention is now entering its 106th ballot, with President Pelosi, Vice President Obama, Sen. Clinton, and former senator John Edwards struggling for supremacy. But whoever wins, a brighter day looms. Or, as Sen. Kerry put it, "Le jour de gloire est arrivé!" ◆

Jeff Greenfield is a CNN senior analyst. His books include *The People's Choice* and *Oh Waiter! One Order of Crow! Inside the Strangest Presidential Election Finish in American History.*

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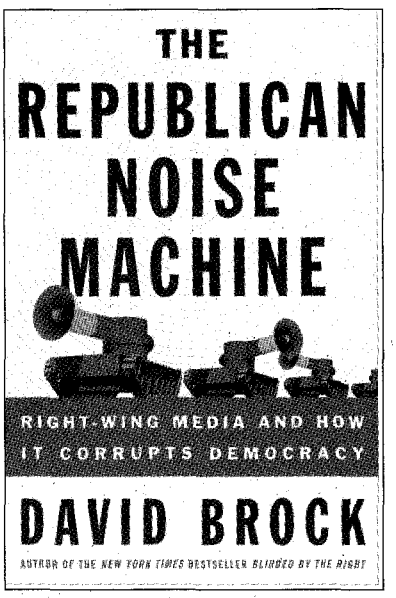
What Ailes Us

Are ideologues or market forces pulling the media to the right?

By James Warren

David Brock is a former arsonist now hawking fire extinguishers, and his makeover humbles any on display in the pages of *Cosmopolitan* or *Glamour*. This may explain the unease among both his prior co-conspirators on the political right and new allies on the left as he surfaces as a pop culture Margaret Mead, here dissecting the purported hijacking of the American media by strange tribes of conservatives.

Brock was a self-acknowledged journalistic butcher who plied his falsehood-filled trade at the Heritage Foundation, *The Washington Times* and *The American Spectator*, gaining notoriety for sliming Bill Clinton in the fabled "troopergate" opus for the *Spectator* and in a book trashing Anita Hill, the critic of Clarence Thomas's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court. His awful *oeuvre* was so vast that most don't even recall one of the most hideous magazine pieces of our time—an overwrought, misogynistic 1999 *Esquire* profile of former California congressman Michael Huffington's decision to come out of the closet. This world-exclusive by Brock, who is also gay, was crafted with the agreement that the demonette of Huffington's tale, ex-wife Arianna, would not even be allowed to respond to allegations of skullduggery and gold-digging manipulation. *Esquire*'s "The Strange Odyssey of Michael Huffington" served



The Republican Noise Machine
By David Brock
Crown, $25.95

as a melancholy reminder that journalism has no minimum standards for entry.

Well, Brock says he subsequently saw the light (largely due to belatedly perceiving injustices done to Bill Clinton), switched political sides, and learned the benefits of rigor in reporting. His crossing this ideological bridge is not unlike treks by more notable figures in the annals of media, notably Walter Winchell (who supported, then excoriated President Franklin Roosevelt), Westbrook Pegler (who went way, way right) and William Randolph Hearst (a liberal Democrat transformed into another Roosevelt hater). Brock's book on Hillary Clinton is said to have inspired his transition, which in turn generated a book-length confession of his past misdeeds and a frantic assertion of how deeply he craved redemption.

The Republican Noise Machine is a lengthy, and not uninteresting, look at the impressive rebound of right-leaning thought in American (mostly Washington-based) media, personified by the current ascendancy of the FOX News Channel, riding its wonderfully effective and disingenuous slogan, "fair and balanced." His case for a right-wing conspiracy would make Hillary Clinton smile. Funded by deep-pocketed conservatives and intellectually inspired by various partisan think tanks, it encompasses right-wing talk radio hosts (Rush Limbaugh and Rush wannabes) along with aggressive book publishers, Internet impresario Matt Drudge, and of course, their beloved FOX. Frustrated by what they all deem traditional "liberal" domination of media and culture, they are said to constitute a propaganda machine to rival anything ever created in the old Soviet bloc.

Brock reminds the reader of a multitude of significant curiosities: How former Capitol Hill staffer Paul Weyrich, "an organizational genius," played a crucial role in the 1970s by beginning to redefine media on conservatives' terms; the domination of newspaper op-ed pages by conservatives; the dramatic reshaping and "awe-

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some market power" of talk radio, and the coming of Limbaugh, once the courts had struck down the FCC's Fairness Doctrine; the head-turning smears of Bill Clinton, including *The Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page; the red-baiting and error-filled legacy of Robert Novak, now an improbable eminence grise of cable punditry; the occasionally paper-thin credentials of authors of numerous conservative think-tank reports gobbled up by the media; the rise of loony commentators such as Ann Coulter, Alan Keyes, and Michael Savage; the very way in which the CNN "Crossfire" mode of debate has favored those on the right with little penchant for nuance; and the increasing gulf between right- and left-leaning media definitions of basic fairness.

Along the way, Brock seems to touch upon virtually every figure, big and small, in the modern conservative movement—Irving Kristol and son William, Pat Buchanan, Richard Viguerie, George Will, Cal Thomas, Robert Bork, Rupert Murdoch, Bill O'Reilly, Ronald Reagan, Reed Irvine, Roger Ailes, Newt Gingrich, Barry Goldwater, Grover Norquist, Phyllis Schlafly, William F. Buckley, William Safire, Amway Corp. founder Richard DeVos, publisher Richard Mellon Scaife, and beer mogul Joseph Coors, among many others. He establishes connections among the think tanks, their patrons, and the skewed studies which the think tanks feed to an all-too-obliging and lazy press. He reminds one of the woeful histories of wrongheaded declarations by Limbaugh and Drudge, but also why they tend to be more potent proselytizers than their ideological opponents.

Central to the right's success has been money, and Brock is good at collating various disclosures over the years about lucrative and conservative politics. In a Washington world in which the Brookings Institution was long dominant, the rise of the American Enterprise Institute, Heritage Foundation, and CATO Institute, among others, was significant, and none could have happened without the funding of ideologically-driven Scaife, Olin, Bradley, and Coors foundations and families. To a far greater extent than their "liberal counterparts," notably Ford, Rockefeller, and Pew, these groups coordinated efforts and had scant desire to support open-minded, empirical research as they threw hundreds of millions of dollars the way of like-minded groups and individuals, including former Judge Robert Bork, William Kristol (a close childhood chum and a friend of mine), Richard Perle, and Dinesh D'Souza, who has received an estimated $1.5 million in conservative grants to boost his speaking and writing careers on subjects such as affirmative action.

As an undergraduate, D'Souza was associated with the right-wing, at times racist and homophobic *Dartmouth Review*, one of many campus papers funded by a group called the Institute for Education Affairs. That organization, the handiwork of the Olin Foundation and Irving Kristol, led a successful effort to cultivate conservative journalists and pundits nationwide. As Brock outlines it, this outreach to young conservatives also benefited existing journalists on the right, such as columnist Robert Novak. Novak, as Brock shows, made a mint off his connections, not just by operating a paid newsletter but also by holding twice-yearly conferences for subscribers at which they could hobnob with the same conservative officials whom he used as sources. Today, Novak, a sterling beneficiary of First Amendment protections, closes his gathering to the media—a gambit that would simply not be allowed if he were a full-time employee of any respectable newspaper (he slips through the cracks of ethics rules as a syndicated columnist with a loose affiliation with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, as well as a regular contributor to CNN, which clearly does not care about his ethically-challenged buckraking).

As important, if not depressing, is the generally correct assertion that the right plays by a different set of journalistic standards. Brock is most informative when reminding one of the unceasing string of unabashed atrocities published and broadcast by conservative magazines and television pundits. Whether it was a bogus Heritage paper on Bill Clinton proposing "the largest tax increase in world history" or one on African-American males being shafted by Social Security due to their lower life expectancies, such claims found a ready conduit in the likes of MSNBC host Joe Scarborough, FOX's Sean Hannity, and Rush Limbaugh. A CATO Institute study discrediting the Head Start program, claiming that "heredity so strongly determines behavior that early intervention is a waste of time," was the handiwork of a man with no credentials in the field.

The Clinton years showed this rough network at its most effective, and at times scurrilous. Brock recalls how outlandish claims of Clinton-related drug running and murder were matter-of-factly spread by a wide spectrum of people including Jerry Falwell, the *Spectator*, Limbaugh, and *The New York Post*. Limbaugh routinely proffered the notion that White House deputy counsel Vince Foster's death was "a suicide cover-up, possibly murder," with the producer of his short-lived TV show, Roger Ailes, parroting the same during a Don Imus appearance, heralding the anti-Clinton craziness of a Scaife-backed journalist named Christopher Ruddy who heavily promoted the murder notion. All this played out with no small help from perhaps the conservative network's most provocative handmaiden, the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* even produced five books of hyperbolic editorials on the Whitewater non-scandal.

With Clinton gone, the right hasn't lacked for new targets to attack and causes to promote, focusing in recent years on subjects such as Saddam Hussein. Conservative magazines such as William Kristol's *Weekly Standard* went into overdrive promoting a link between Saddam and al Qaeda; one cover story simply declaring, "Case Closed," while beating the drums for a preemptive invasion and suggesting that failure to support such an endeavor was unpatriotic.

Together, Brock contends, these cadres of individuals and conservative institutions form a seamless web whose intent is not just to discredit but also to smash opponents and dominate the means of communication. And with growing consolidation of ownership, he

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argues, is coming incipient control by a single ideology.

It is a tempting but very untidy argument, reflecting someone who has perhaps spent too long in the media echo chamber of Washington, not to mention someone too given to caricature of corporations and individuals alike. At best, it's a nice and provocative clip job. For the most part, the analysis is reliably executed, though Brock occasionally tilts his data. For example, he conveniently omits Brookings in comparisons of the number of times conservative think tanks and liberal think tanks are cited in the media.

But someone who so hungers, as does Brock, to be taken seriously by us supposedly bona fide journalists should have exhibited a bit more ingenuity and grit to dig out new information and provide new analysis, for example, revealing how exactly the Republican National Committee seems to work in such lockstep with Limbaugh, Novak, and others to position issues.

Absent specific explanation, he falls back on conspiratorial suspicions and innuendo. For example, there is media ownership and his belief that it forces an ideology upon the national marketplace. Brock seems to forget that Murdoch and Ailes, the savvy tactician who runs FOX News Channel, aren't forcing a view down American throats as they are adroitly filling a clear, if small, market niche; mostly older, white males of conservative stripe who are the core of the modest cable news audience and simply felt CNN was not their cup of tea. These are people who can make a plausible argument that key institutions in the society, including the elite print and broadcast media and academia, have long exhibited a general consensus on issues such as abortion, affirmative action, school prayer, welfare, and military spending—and they simply do not share that consensus.

As for individuals, few are more ham-handedly dealt with here than CNN's mercurial founder, Ted Turner. He's portrayed as a virtual nutbag conservative for, among other things, having supported Barry Goldwater for president in 1964 and having given Novak and others prominent airtime on CNN. This characterization overlooks Turner's admirable internationalist streak, suspicion of organized religion, huge donations to the United Nations, and ironclad environmentalism, all of which endear him to liberals, not conservatives. When Brock rings his hands over the growth of FOX, he forgets to mention the debilitating effect that Turner's departure has had on CNN. Murdoch and Ailes have succeeded in no small measure because once-proud CNN—where I was once a paid contributor and have good friends—has self-immolated, at this moment having no apparent long-term strategy and lacking a mensch like Turner, a tough-minded and brilliant soul who would defend CNN against FOX, shredding the "Fair and balanced" mantra, in a manner seemingly foreign to Turner's successors.

Rush Limbaugh: conservative mastermind or savvy self-promoter?

To declare that the right has won in certain sectors of the media is not to acknowledge a conspiracy. After all, the market itself tends to win out. That is also why it is wrong to find the current polarization and fragmentation of media consumption anything but an incremental return to a past of far greater polarization and fragmentation. Does anyone not recall those days of six and seven newspapers in a big city, with coverage so slanted as to make FOX and Drudge look more like C-Span? Lord, Chicago reporters used to routinely identify themselves to grieving families as cops so they could con their way into a home to fetch a photo of the murder victim. Detroit reporters got freebie cars from General Motors and Ford to take on vacation. I worked side-by-side with one Pulitzer Prize winner who had exterminating contracts with the city government on which he reported, and with another who took booze, sports apparel, and U.S. Open tennis tickets from firms on which he reported. Let us not get too misty-eyed about days gone by or too anxious about the fumbling and declining standards of today.

So what is really going on? Yes, Republicans are more effective in communicating their ideas, and clearly do exploit a nexus of think tanks, pundits, and both cable and radio hosts in an aggressive, frequently error-filled manner simply not seen on the left. (The notion that the National Public Radio is as ideologically-driven as, say, Limabaugh or O'Reilly may comfort the right, but is simply inaccurate.) But Democrats are not exactly ham-handed, as one sees with the filmmaker Michael Moore, a sort of Limbaugh with a camera, or the millions being spent by George Soros and MoveOn.org to prevent the reelection of President Bush.

Yes, a group of largely Republican TV viewers have found a comfort zone in watching FOX, though they remain a piddling-sized audience (roughly two

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million a day) compared to those lured to HBO and pro wrestling, not to mention those of broadcast TV's prime time shows. Yes, one does have a surface sense of a more partisan media, largely due to all that shouting going on at FOX, CNN, and MSNBC. But don't forget where Americans still get their news by and large: the inescapably bland and often dumb local TV stations where happy talk, not ideology or conflict, dominates. The dumbing down of America, not its political shaping by sinister forces, is our real challenge.

Yes, a growing group of media executives may look at the success of more strident competitors and wonder if that's the way to go. But those same pinstripers are increasingly throwing money at niche products with narrow audiences of various genders, demographics, and politics because advertisers have begun to turn away from the mass audience and hunger for those slices. Heck, mainstream advertisers are beginning to support Internet blogs and videogames. And the pinstripers have shareholders whom they rightfully aim to please. If Murdoch had the choice between creating a moneymaking, liberal-leaning cable channel and going back to Sydney, you really think he'd be on the next Quantas flight?

And don't forget, as President Bush and John Kerry won't, the middle. It's where this election will probably be won, per usual. It exists, no matter how many lies spread by journalists and assorted fakers are believed by various media constituencies. There may be a Republican Noise Machine, as Brock contends. But no matter how much it pushes a set of views, such as the one heralding our invasion of Iraq (flag waving at the top right or left of your screen), the machine won't convince a majority that the loss of lives was worthwhile if their gut and good sense tells them otherwise. And that consensus appears to be growing. As Mikhail Gorbachev and his Soviet predecessors learned the hard way, there are always limits to the selling of a faulty product.

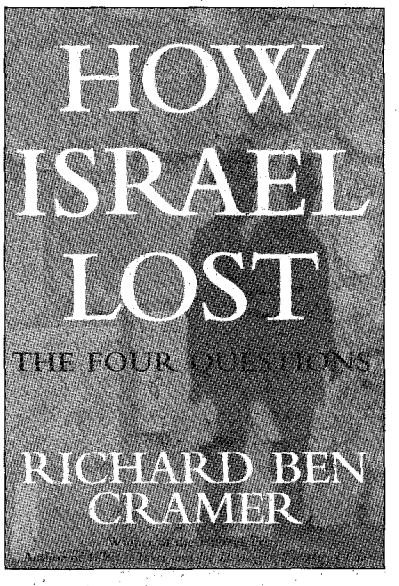
James Warren is a deputy managing editor at *The Chicago Tribune* and a former Washington bureau chief.

This Land Is My Land

How Arafat and Sharon have debased the very societies they claim to serve.

By Joshua Hammer

Maj. Gen. Dan Halutz is one of the more disquieting faces of the new Israel. A key figure behind Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy of "targeted killings" of suspected militants, Halutz was the Air Force general who ordered an F-16 to drop a 1,000-kilogram bomb on the densely populated apartment block in Gaza City where Salah Shehadeh, the leader of Hamas's military wing, was hiding. The bomb killed Shehadeh, his wife, young daughter, and 14 other Palestinians, nine of them children under the age of 11. Asked later by a Ha'aretz interviewer whether Halutz had any remorse about the incident, which was condemned across the world, the general brushed off the question with a defense of Israeli assassination policy and a pro-forma statement of regret for the children who had been blown to pieces. "If you insist on wanting to know what I feel when I release a bomb, I will tell you," he said. "I feel a slight bump to the plane as a result of bomb's release. A second later it passes, and that's all. That is what I feel."



How Israel Lost
By Richard Ben Cramer
Simon & Schuster, $24.00

Halutz's callousness, it turns out, is no aberration. As Richard Ben Cramer relates in *How Israel Lost: The Four Questions*, his wry, resonant new book about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Air Force commander didn't lose his job over

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the comments. Instead, he was celebrated by many as a hero, while the killing of Shehadeh was roundly praised by Sharon as a success. And that, Cramer writes, is what puzzles him: Sure, Shehadeh had blood on his hands. But how is it that Israelis can shrug off the deaths of so many innocents? Written in Cramer's inimitable style—chatty, pulsating with energy, peppered with italicizations, ellipses, and exclamation points—the book often reads like a late-night screed proffered by a close friend over a whiskey at the corner bar. That's no criticism: Cramer's fierce integrity, unburdened by political correctness, cuts through the false pieties and the deceit on both sides to get to the ugly heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Cramer grew up in Rochester, N.Y., a "ham-on-rye Jew" with only a superficial knowledge of the Middle East until he was dispatched there by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1977. He learned quickly that the catch phrase he'd been taught in Sunday school— that Israel was "a land without people for a people without land"—was false. Palestinians had a historical narrative, too, he discovered, and a viable claim to nationhood. Cramer developed friendships throughout the Arab world; he also retained an admiration for the Jewish state and affection for its people. Twenty years later, with the Palestinian intifada raging across the West Bank and Gaza, with two peoples locked into a vicious cycle of suicide bombings and targeted assassinations, the perplexed writer decided to check things out for himself. "See, I thought I knew the country—but it turned out, I didn't," he writes. "At least I couldn't understand how the country I knew was doing the things that I read about now."

Cramer returned to find a country brutalized by the intifada. The Israel he knew had been fragmented into a dozen competing interest groups—ultra-orthodox, Russian émigrés, Sephardic Jews, settlers—each pursuing its own agenda and united only by their hatred for the Other, the Palestinians. The heavy-handed tactics of its military—the checkpoint abuses, targeted killings, collective punishment in the name of security—were widely ignored or tolerated by a population consumed by fear. "The standards have changed," Cramer was told by Sever Plotzker, a columnist for the respected Israel daily *Yediot Ahronot*. "These days, clean does not mean 100 percent clean. Thirty percent dirty is still clean." Yet those same tactics were only provoking more hatred and rage in the occupied territories. Presiding over this process of debasement was Sharon, portrayed by Cramer as a brute and a bully who keeps the conflict plugging along to keep himself in power and advance his agenda: permanent occupation of the West Bank. In the atmosphere of distortions and half-truths, of resentment and hatred stirred up by Sharon and his allies, some of his sharpest critics, Cramer finds, have now become supporters. Cramer meets an old friend, Brigadier Yitzhak Pundak, a former Gaza Strip governor who once preached coexistence with the Palestinians and who called Sharon a disgraceful officer in his memoirs. Pundak lashes out at Arafat for rejecting Ehud Barak's offer at Camp David in 2000—and says he's voting for Sharon in the next election.

Cramer doesn't let the Palestinians off the hook. Although he believes that Barak's offer was by no means a good deal for them—borders of the new nation of Palestine would be torturously drawn around Jewish settlements, connected by highways and checkpoints all patrolled by Israelis—Cramer hammers Yasser Arafat for his ineffectiveness. He portrays the Palestinian leader as a pathetic figure consumed by a lust for power and perquisites who "left open the entire field of leadership to be filled by Islamic holy warriors. And the nation he was supposed to father is stillborn." Arafat's Palestinian Authority, a klepto-government of ruffians and thieves, routinely uses violence to enforce the party line. When the respected Palestinian pollster Khalil Shikaki, for example, found that only 10 percent of Palestinian refugees were interested in exercising their Right of Return, he was set upon by Fatah thugs. In one of Cramer's most powerful profiles, we meet a man identified only as "Kandil"—a successful businessman who is railroaded by political enemies into the Palestinian gulag, where he is tortured for months. Kandil is finally rescued from the jail in Arafat's headquarters, or muqata, by Israeli troops. Meeting the mother of a suicide bomber in Gaza, who clings to her son's meaningless death as a honorable sacrifice, Cramer writes: "I should have told her the same thing I would have told Sharon: that it seems to me, you can't make a nation—not a strong or good one—based on whom you hate, or how may of them you kill."

Is there any way out of the morass? Cramer is a bit glib when he ponders the possibility of a peace deal. "Compared to, say, Cyprus or Northern Ireland, it's a piece of babka," he insists. He correctly states that the cards are all on the table: two separate states, the withdrawal of Israel from its settlements, the division of Jerusalem, and shared sovereignty over the Temple Mount. He is also right that the violent status quo has served the interests of many people in high places—not least of all Sharon and Arafat. Locked in a deadly embrace, each dependent on the other for power, these two aging combatants resort to crude methods to keep themselves in the game. "Arafat...buys his loyalty with hard currency," Cramer writes. "Sharon obtains his with a cheesy scrip of fear." Cramer's vital, depressing book shows how these two aging figures have debased the very societies they claim to serve.

Joshua Hammer is *Newsweek*'s Jerusalem bureau chief.

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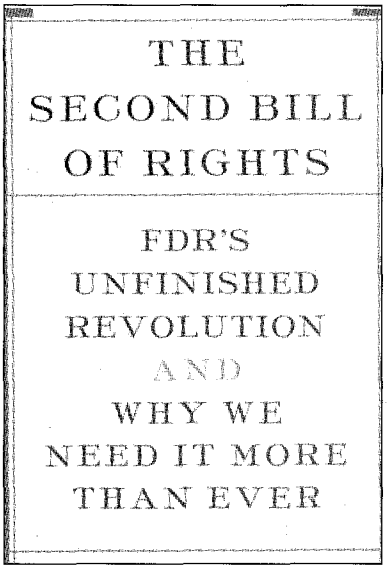
And Welfare For All?

Cass Sunstein's case for inalienable economic rights.

By Daniel Farber

Three decades ago, young stars of constitutional law like Larry Tribe were advocating a constitutional right to welfare. For reasons that are probably obvious, the idea has faded from sight over the past 20 years. A right to welfare sounds out of place in a world in which a Democratic president has successfully campaigned to "end welfare as we know it." Admittedly, advocates of constitutional welfare rights did not merely, or even primarily, mean the right of single unemployed mothers to receive government stipends; they had in mind a broader set of rights to protect basic "welfare" in the general sense of human needs. But constitutional welfare rights do appear to be out of tune with the *zeitgeist*, and arguments on their behalf have been scarce.

In *The Second Bill of Rights*, Cass Sunstein, a University of Chicago law professor who is one of today's academic stars, reopens this debate. He makes a surprisingly plausible case for resurrecting this idea with some modern twists. Recalling FDR's proposal for a "second of bill of rights" protecting basic human needs, Sunstein urges Americans to recognize a new list of constitutional rights, including access to a good education and health care,



The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More Than Ever
By Cass Sunstein
Basic Books, $25.00

and the opportunity to work at a fair wage—in essence, economic rights in addition to the largely political rights enshrined in the country's founding documents.

But Sunstein is ambiguous on the nature of these proposed new rights. It's not clear whether these rights would be enforceable in court; in any event, the "Second Bill of Rights" is only a metaphor because Sunstein does not advocate an actual constitutional amendment. If they aren't enforceable and aren't written, what they amount to is a conscious commitment to make these rights part of our conception of America, with the expectation that doing so will force the political system to make good on that commitment.

Like the vast majority of Americans, Sunstein takes it for granted that it would be good for every American to have the opportunity to obtain health care, an education, a job, and other basics of life. That seems reasonable enough: A few Social Darwinists may survive to urge that the unsuccessful should starve to death and their children should remain illiterate, but if they are to be found at all, it is on the most lunatic fringe. As Sunstein recognizes, the real question isn't about the desirability of satisfying basic human needs; it's about whether we should guarantee government assistance in satisfying these needs by making them into a right, constitutional or otherwise. (After all, we might think that other institutions—the market, families, churches, and so forth—would do a better job of satisfying these needs if the government didn't get involved. Or we might think that the government does have such a responsibility, but that constitutional process has little to contribute.) The conventional wisdom is that constitutionalizing economic rights would be pointless, counter-productive, or impossible in our society. Sunstein devotes most of his efforts to rebutting the common arguments in favor of that conventional wisdom.

One such argument is that the welfare state is contrary to the essential American character. Sunstein points out that recognizing these needs as rights has not always been outside the American mainstream. His main evidence comes from the New Deal, and particularly from FDR's thinking about social goals. In a now-forgotten speech that Sunstein spotlights, FDR called for a new Bill of Rights along the lines that Sunstein advocates. Twenty years later, the Warren Court flirted with recognizing constitutional rights to food, shelter, and other necessities. If Nixon hadn't squeaked out a victory in 1968 and appointed four conserv-

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ative justices, Sunstein contends, the court might well have heeded the advice of liberal constitutional law scholars and recognized economic constitutional rights.

Thus, as Sunstein puts it, one can easily imagine an alternative universe in which the Warren court trends were continued, by new justices appointed by President Hubert Humphrey. (One could call this the "Sliding Doors" version of constitutional history, in honor of the Gwyneth Paltrow movie.) So, Sunstein maintains, it can hardly be said that such a Second Bill of Rights is an utter impossibility in America.

Second, there is nothing about American constitutional law that would preclude the recognition of these rights. True, these rights are not mentioned in the Constitution. But the Constitution also has nothing to say about gender equality, and as originally understood, it did not prohibit segregated schools. This has not prevented the Supreme Court from recognizing these rights. Despite conservative arguments for narrow constitutional interpretation, Americans do not seem ready to tolerate segregated schools or limits on the rights of women merely because they were accepted at the time of the Fourteenth Amendment. Thus, it would not be necessary to actually amend the Constitution in order to give economic rights constitutional status.

Indeed, our legal system does recognize a number of economic rights—notably, the right to a free public education, the right to a public defender in a criminal case, and the right to emergency medical care. Given the public consensus that exists in favor of these rights, it isn't hard to imagine that they might receive constitutional status as might other similar rights (like the right to employment opportunities). Surely, what Sunstein is advocating would be a major step, but our constitutional system has grown in similar ways in the past.

A third argument against constitutional economic rights is that courts are not suited to enforcing them. Here, Sunstein is at his best. He observes that a number of other countries have added welfare rights to their constitutions but made them non-enforceable. The goal is not to empower judges but to announce a serious national commitment. Other countries, notably South Africa, have made such rights judicially enforceable, but the courts have been careful to intervene only in extreme cases. The rights are defined in a way that acknowledges limited funds and requires only that the government make progress toward the goal.

Yet another option would be to make cautious modifications in current constitutional doctrines, giving special procedural protection to critical human needs or demanding better justifications for curtailing them than for other economic interests. Rather than demanding that the government establish programs to satisfy critical human needs, the courts would simply try to prevent arbitrary exclusions from those programs or unequal distribution of benefits. For example, courts could demand justifications for unequal funding for different groups. The Warren court may have been moving in this direction, but the Burger court put an end to this trend. Notably, the critical Burger made an effort to use the federal Constitution to equalize educational funding in Texas. But that case could easily have gone the other way. Like a number of other state courts, the Texas Supreme Court later interpreted the state constitution to require more equal funding. Americans seem to have adapted to these state court rulings without suffering any fundamental trauma. A similar decision from the Supreme Court would not have been out of the question had its makeup been different.

A fourth argument is that economic rights would be counterproductive. Some of the adverse effects suffered by

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European welfare states are well known, and many economists believe that measures like the minimum wage and rent control actually hurt the poor. Acknowledging these criticisms, Sunstein nevertheless argues in a somewhat Clintonian mode for smarter programs—for example, he favors the earned income credit over minimum-wage laws.

The Second Bill of Rights makes a good case for giving greater heed to the special status of certain human needs in constitutional law. Perhaps the Warren court decisions deserve a more generous application than they have received. Sunstein provides a credible argument for some doctrinal modifications. Accomplishing this is no mean achievement. But he wants more than some modest fine-tuning of Supreme Court doctrine. He wants a more fundamental orientation of social goals: a Second Bill of Rights, not just federal court involvement in school finance cases or the like. Though he makes a reasonable argument for this outcome, it's an argument that seems curiously academic and unlikely to influence the national agenda.

Part of the problem is precisely that Sunstein is an academic—too good an academic to conceal some of the weaknesses of his proposal. He admits that state constitutional efforts to equalize educational financing have had mixed results and may not have done much for poor children. He also tells us that since 1938, the New York state constitution has mandated public support for the poor. Although the state courts have provided some enforcement for this provision, this doesn't seem to have done much to abolish poverty in New York. International studies, Sunstein reports, show that welfare rights do increase transfer payments, but constitutional rights to education seem to have negative effects, and the right to health services has at best a weak positive effect. Thus, constitutional economic rights might do some good—but enough good to be worth a constitutional revolution?

Another weakness of his book, considered as political advocacy rather than academic scholarship, is that it relies so heavily on FDR and the New Deal. For better or worse, Franklin Delano Roosevelt no longer carries the emotional heft in American society that it once did. Even a great president is likely to fade from memory some 60 years after his death, even if he is assassinated like Lincoln or Kennedy. Indeed, even among liberals, an appeal to the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., would probably carry more rhetorical punch than an invocation of FDR.

The biggest flaw in Sunstein's analysis, however, is that he recalls only Roosevelt's unfinished revolution, shrugging off the more recent unfinished revolution of Ronald Reagan. Although Sunstein obviously understands that the political climate of the past two decades has been adverse to the goals he advocates, he seems to regard this merely as a practical obstacle rather than as a possible sign that American society has moved to a more individualistic vision. Sunstein's ideas about policy implementation are much more sophisticated than those of old-fashioned liberals, but his basic goals stem from the New Deal and the Great Society. He recognizes that the "administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush have included many who are skeptical of the New Deal." But Sunstein doesn't seem to attach much significance to this observation. He takes a little too much comfort from the idea that his program would have been adopted if only the 1968 campaign had lasted for the few additional weeks needed for the Humphrey wave to crest. That may or may not be true, but there have been a lot of elections since 1968, and his vision has not fared well in them. Our society is more deeply divided than he recognizes, and the New Deal is no longer a unifying political creed.

Of course, presidential elections do not always reflect national mandates (as the outcome of the 2000 election amply illustrates). But in some important ways, these conservative Republican presidents have indeed been in tune with the *zeitgeist*. Sunstein himself provides some striking supporting evidence. Far from embracing welfare rights, "only 23 percent of Americans accept the view that government has a duty to 'take care of very poor people who can't take care of themselves.'" Even among the less affluent, he reports, only a bare majority agree that the "government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed," and two-thirds of the more affluent reject this proposition. Moreover, even among the less affluent, there are those who are alienated from public institutions, particularly the evangelicals.

These attitudes are also reflected at the governmental level: The United States is one of the five nations that has refused to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which embodies much of Sunstein's "Second Bill." This is not to say that Americans are unremittingly hostile to government assistance for the disadvantaged, and Sunstein also reports some differently phrased surveys that tend to support rights to full employment and medical care. Still, it is clear that Reagan was tapping into some deeply held American beliefs.

We do not live in FDR's America anymore, and we also don't live in Reagan's. Important parts of his vision failed to take hold or have been repudiated by the American people, like his anti-environmentalism. But it is a mistake to believe that the aspirations of the New Deal define our national political identity. Many Americans do share Sunstein's vision of government responsibility to ensure economic rights. Many others have a more individualistic vision, or believe that private institutions such as churches have the primary responsibility for providing services. The real question is not whether, as Sunstein advocates, we should translate a national commitment toward economic rights into a constitutional mandate. It is whether we as a nation actually do have such a commitment. Should the government be responsible for ensuring the opportunity to satisfy basic human needs? At present, that is an open question—and a political question rather than a philosophical or legal one.

Daniel Farber, the Sho Sato Professor of Law at the University of California at Berkeley, is the author of *Lincoln's Constitution*.

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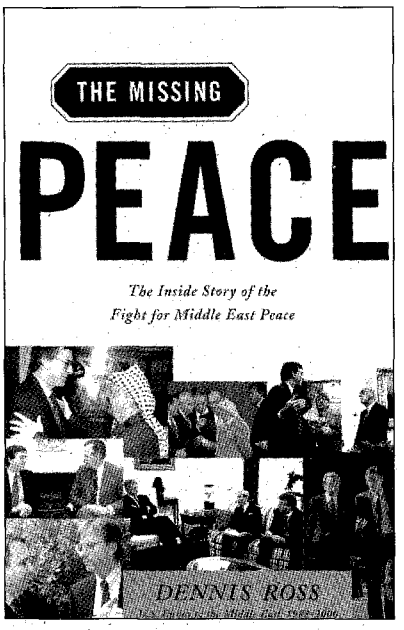
Tired are the Peacemakers

Tales from the Arab-Israeli negotiating table.

By Dan Ephron

The Israeli-Arab conflict has a way of leaving tragic figures in its wake. Think of Yitzhak Rabin, a hero of Israel's 1967 war who overcame his revulsion for Yasser Arafat and made peace with the PLO, only to be assassinated by a fellow Israeli. Or Mahmoud Abbas, the former Palestinian prime minister with more vision than most of his contemporaries who was done in by Ariel Sharon's unyieldingness and Arafat's duplicity. Dennis Ross, Washington's main troubleshooter for the Middle East for more than 12 years under two American presidents, is such a figure. Though Ross conducted scores of shuttle diplomacy missions to the area and leaned on just about every Arab and Israeli leader, the peace he sought remains elusive. In fact, in many respects Israelis and Arabs were worse off when Ross left his position in January 2001 than they were when he began his mediation. Palestinians and Israelis are locked in a cycle of bloody violence. Israelis and Syrians have no prospect for a peace agreement despite edging close to one three times during the 1990s. The peace accord signed between Israel and Jordan in 1994 is intact but not necessarily because of American efforts.



The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace

By Dennis Ross

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, $35.00

In his riveting 800-page memoir, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Dennis Ross casts himself in the Jewish tradition of a "rodef shalom"—a seeker of peace with an endless store of innovative compromises and creative ambiguities. He certainly scored some interim successes along the way. Ross helped mediate four provisional Israeli-Palestinian agreements, including one that saw Israeli troops withdraw from most West Bank cities. He got Syrian and Israeli leaders to reveal their bottom lines regarding the disputed Golan Heights at a summit in Geneva in 2000, where the gap proved tantalizingly small but stubbornly unbridgeable. At Camp David a few months later, he helped assemble Israelis and Palestinians for dramatic end-of-conflict talks. Though they didn't clinch an agreement, the two sides finally broached the most volatile issues—Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, and the fate of Palestinian refugees. The behind-the-curtain drama of all these events is fleshed out in absorbing detail in his book.

Ross blames the vagaries of the Middle East conflict and the occasional mistakes made by negotiators and mediators for the breakdowns in the peace process. Unelected Arab leaders who had little or no legitimacy at home were averse to risk, and making peace with Israel was a risky business. Israeli prime ministers were constantly weighing the effects of accommodating the Arabs on their chronically unstable coalitions. And if anyone needed more setbacks, there were always Israeli settlements expansion and Palestinian suicide attacks to make the Oslo peace process more confidence-destroying than confidence-building.

But that's not the whole story. On the Palestinian track, at least, Ross believes the mistakes and complications could have been overcome. There, he faults the one leader who "definitively demonstrated that he could not end the conflict": Yasser Arafat. "How many times did Arafat have to tell us no before we heard 'no'?" Ross writes in one of the closing chapters. "How many excuses could be made for him? Those who argue that we just ran out of time ignore the many opportunities Arafat had refused."

Negotiators and scholars have debated for four years now who really was to blame for the breakdown at Camp David. Some, like Rob Malley, who served on President Clinton's National

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U.S. envoy Dennis Ross strains to get Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's attention during a 1997 meeting. Getty Images

Security Council, question whether Israel ever actually made a formal offer and fault Prime Minister Ehud Barak at least in part for the way he dealt with the Palestinians. Malley believes Barak lost his chance with the Palestinians long before Camp David by expanding settlements and nixing long-promised land transfers. Others say the Israeli government never intended for the Palestinian state to be anything more than isolated "Bantustans." But for Ross, the points are moot. Even if Israel's proposals at Camp David did not amount to a genuine peace offering (and Ross believes they did), Arafat would go on to reject a more comprehensive plan and several smaller initiatives.

Ross relates a story that evidently has never appeared in print. In the final weeks of Clinton's term, Barak, who faced a certain election defeat at the hands of Ariel Sharon if he could not reach a last minute peace deal, asked the U.S. president to visit the region for a final push. Ross felt all avenues had been exhausted and opposed the trip. But instead of discouraging Clinton, he suggested one last test. Clinton would ask Arafat to spend 24 hours with former Prime Minister Shimon Peres and cabinet minister Amnon Lipkin Shahak, the two Israelis with whom he felt most comfortable, in an effort to bridge all outstanding gaps. If both sides reported success, Clinton would fly over to help seal the deal.

Clinton liked the idea, and so did Barak. But Arafat balked. "[He] acted like someone facing a visit to the dentist," Ross writes. "He would like to do it, but he would not be available. He had to go to Tunisia." Ross, sitting at Clinton's side during the phone conversation, scribbled to the president, "You are offering him a historic opportunity, you are prepared to take this enormous leap, and he is too busy. What does that tell us?" To Ross, it said Arafat had been a bad investment. Nearly eight years after the Oslo deal, it was time to cut losses.

Ross, who is Jewish, was certainly aware that his ancestry might be viewed negatively by some members of the Palestinian negotiating team. Raised by a Jewish mother and a Catholic stepfather, Ross grew up in a non-religious household in California's Marin County. He describes coming of age in the 1960s, working on the election campaigns of Democrats Robert Kennedy and George McGovern and, like many Jews of his generation, becoming captivated by Israel after the 1967 Middle East war. "I identified with its people and my own Jewish identity became more important to me as a result. Intrinsically, I believed Israel had a right to exist and that the Jewish people needed and deserved a homeland," he writes. But as early as the 1970s, Ross says, he came to believe Israel's policy of building settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was "wrong and misguided."

During his years as a mediator, even as some Palestinians made repeated references to his Judaism and questioned his ability to be unbiased, Ross says he also received nasty letters from supporters of Israel who labeled him a self-hating Jew.

By his own description of the dynamic between members of the U.S. mediation team, Ross was often the most strident defender of Israel's positions. "I was focused not on reconciling rights but on addressing needs," he says in his book. When Israel's political and security needs were discussed in the formulation of Clinton's peace proposal of late 2000, Ross insisted on the Jewish state annexing 6 to 7 percent of the West Bank. Two other team members suggested the annexation be limited to 3 to 4 percent, with Palestinians getting an equivalent swap of territory inside Israel. Ross disagreed: "I felt strongly about six to seven percent annexation and I was not prepared to lower the ceiling. Nor was I prepared to introduce the idea of an equivalent swap." Israel needed that big a slice "for both security and political purposes," Ross argued. And he believed that with 93 percent of the West Bank, Palestinians would have both territorial contiguity and viability.

Ross has praise for other members of the Palestinian negotiating team. He considers Ahmed Qurei, the current Palestinian prime minister, a personal friend. And he singles out two Palestinian negotiators as critical to peacemaking—Mohammed Dahlan, the former Gaza security chief, and Mohammed Rashid, who served for years as Arafat's financial adviser. But it is his encounters with the eccentric PLO chief that stand out. He describes a fierce confrontation with Arafat in 1996, while Ross was shuttling between Israelis and Palestinians to seal a deal on

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the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Hebron. The Palestinian leader had asked for certain compromises from then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Ross was now detailing what he had secured from the Israelis. But instead of being satisfied with the concessions, Arafat demanded new ones. "Are you calling me a liar?" he shouted repeatedly at Ross. "You are always right and I am always wrong. You are always right and I am always wrong," Arafat grumbled. Ross, tired of the abuse, walked towards the door, then turned and flung his binder 15 feet back toward the table where the interlocutors usually ate, knocking over a pitcher of grapefruit juice.

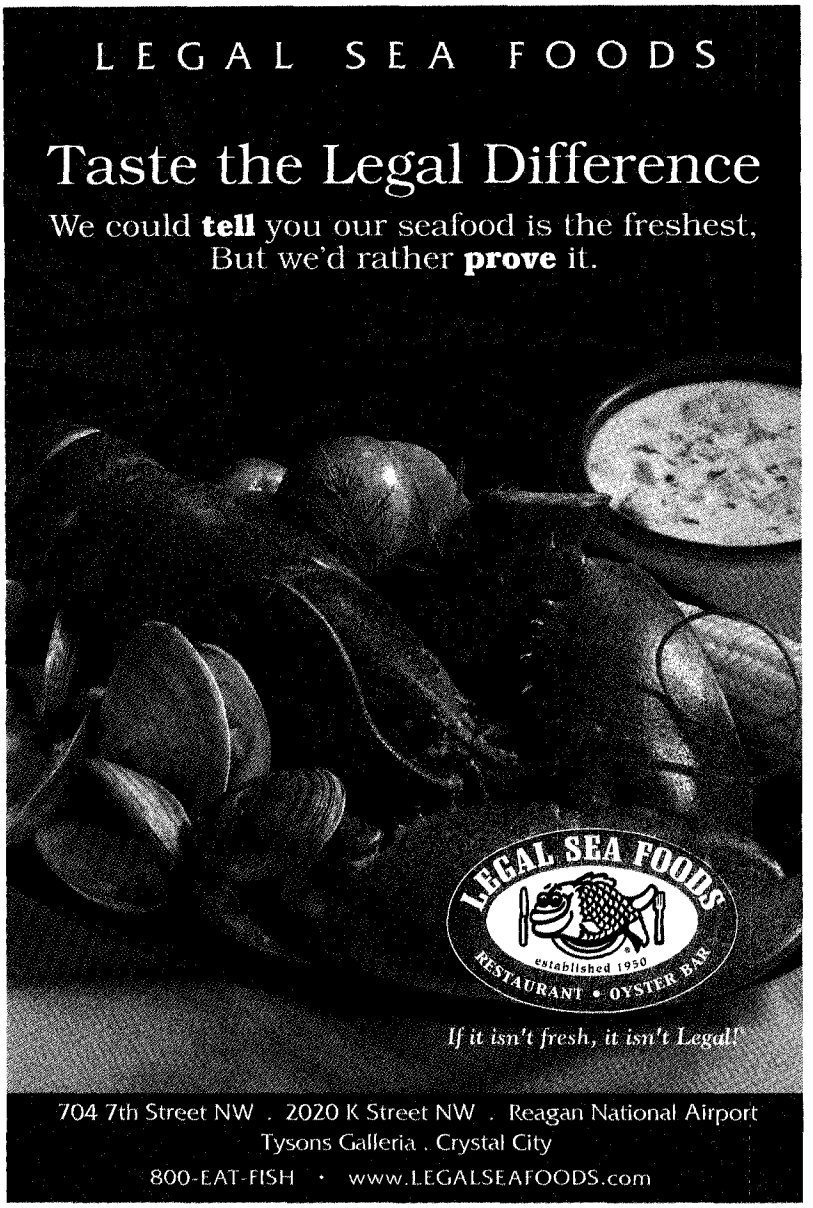
But the book is not without humor. Ross peppers his larger perspectives with amusing anecdotes, like the time he impressed his staff at Camp David by bowling a 163 in the Hawthorne cabin, which has a two-lane bowling alley. Later that night, his team watched the movie *Gladiator* with Palestinian negotiators, including Arafat, Qurei, and Saeb Erekat, who all felt somehow "that the movie was a metaphor for our efforts." When Ross first visited Arafat in Tunisia in 1994, he was struck by the contrast between the PLO's image as a band of revolutionaries and the cushy life they led in their lavish Tunisian villas. "What revolutionaries, I wondered, as I watched the Golden Girls, the show that was playing on the television in the adjoining sitting room? Here I was at Arafat's house, and there were the Golden Girls, rich in Jewish humor, on the tube."

But it was one of the last meetings Ross—along with Clinton and other officials—had with Arafat which he describes in heartbreaking detail. It was Jan. 2, 2001, when Arafat was summoned to the White House to reply to Clinton's peace proposal. Both Israelis and Palestinians had been told to respond unconditionally by late December. Barak accepted but Arafat stalled. The meeting was his last chance. Days earlier, Ross had briefed Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, on the plan. Ross quotes Bandar as saying: "If Arafat does not accept what is available now, it won't be a tragedy, it will be a crime." But in the Oval Office, Arafat objected to almost all the main points, saying that he accepted the ideas but not the details.

Once again, Ross was aghast. "We were seeing a variant of what Arab leaders had always referred to as 'the Arafat answer': "La-Nam" (no and yes in Arabic)," Ross writes. "Arafat had the best deal he could ever get. He could not get more and he had hit the proverbial wall. He could not wring out one more concession or gain one more tactical advantage. We had left the realm of tactics and we now had to face a strategic reality: Arafat could not do a deal that ended the conflict ... Too much redefinition was required. He was not up to it. He could live with a process but not a conclusion."

Weeks after the meeting, Ross left his government job; he now heads the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank that the Council on Foreign Relations describes as "sympathetic to Israel." He says in his book that he remains an optimist, largely because Israelis, Palestinians, and Syrians now all recognize the inevitable contours of their future peace agreements. But he's also a pragmatist, hardened by years of frustrating mediation. "Translating that understanding from an abstraction into a practical reality has proven far more difficult than I had hoped," he writes near the end of his book. "Unfortunately in the case of the Middle East, time does not stand still and too often it is measured in blood."

Dan Ephron is a reporter for *Newsweek*.



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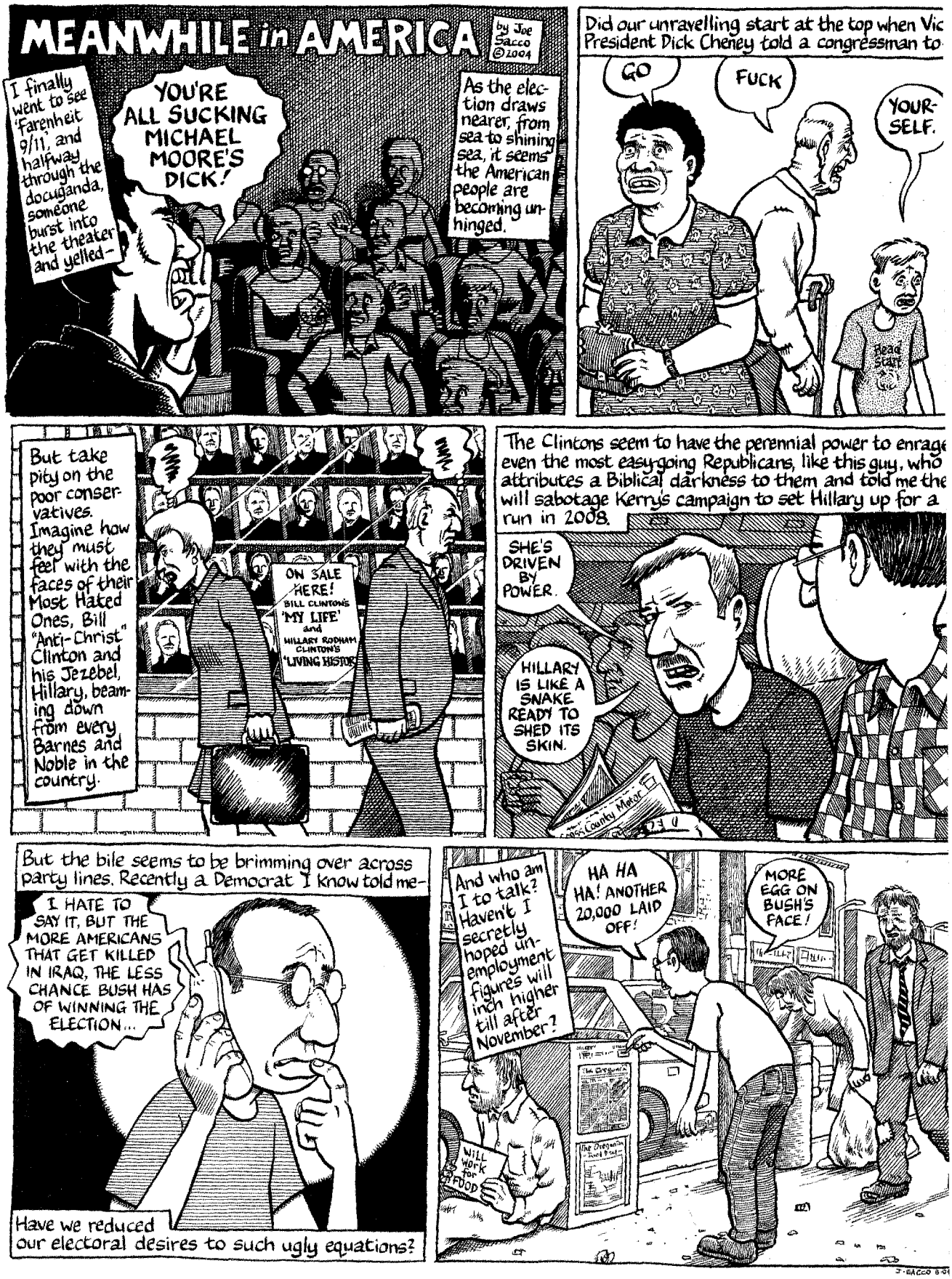

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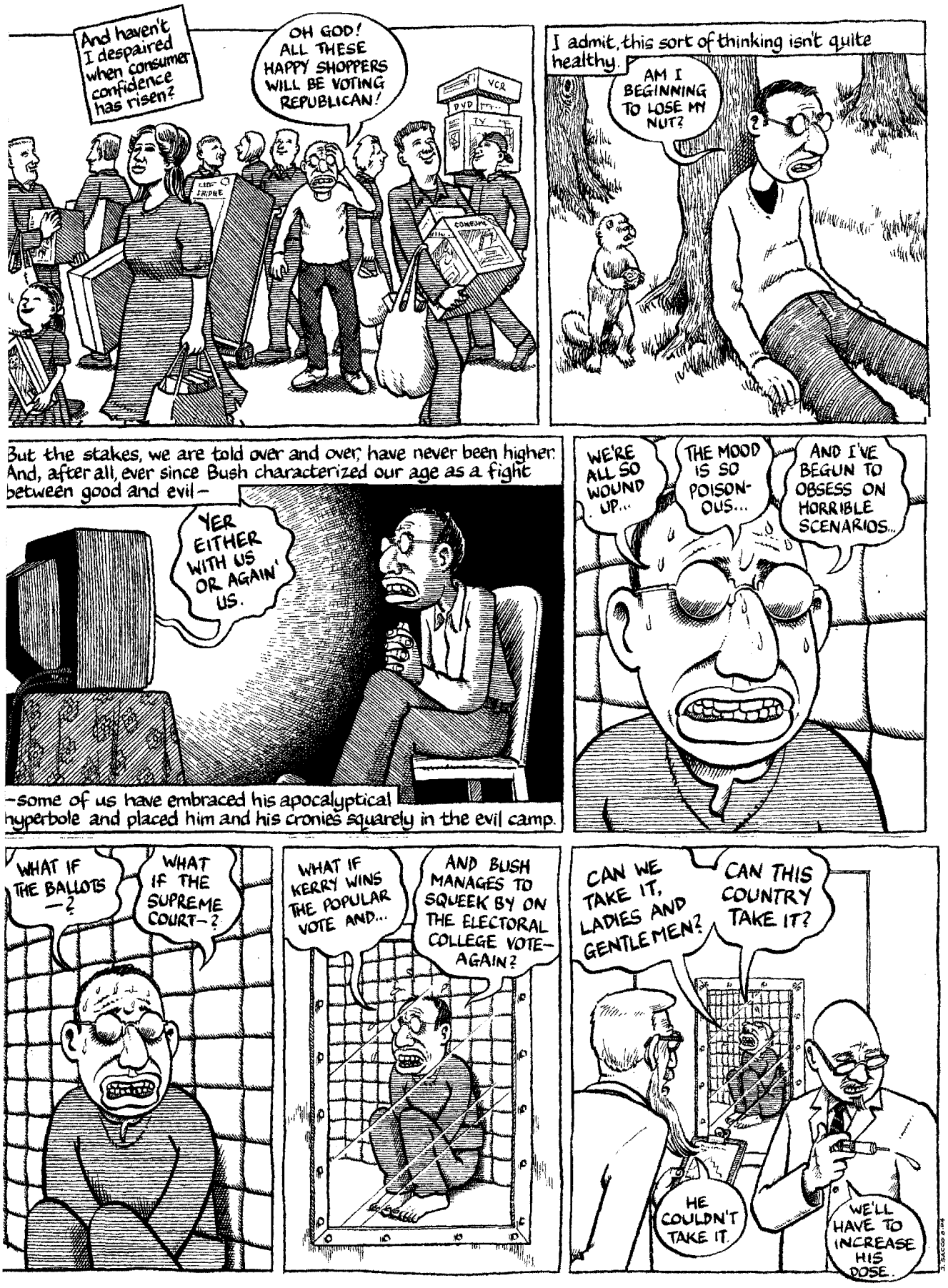

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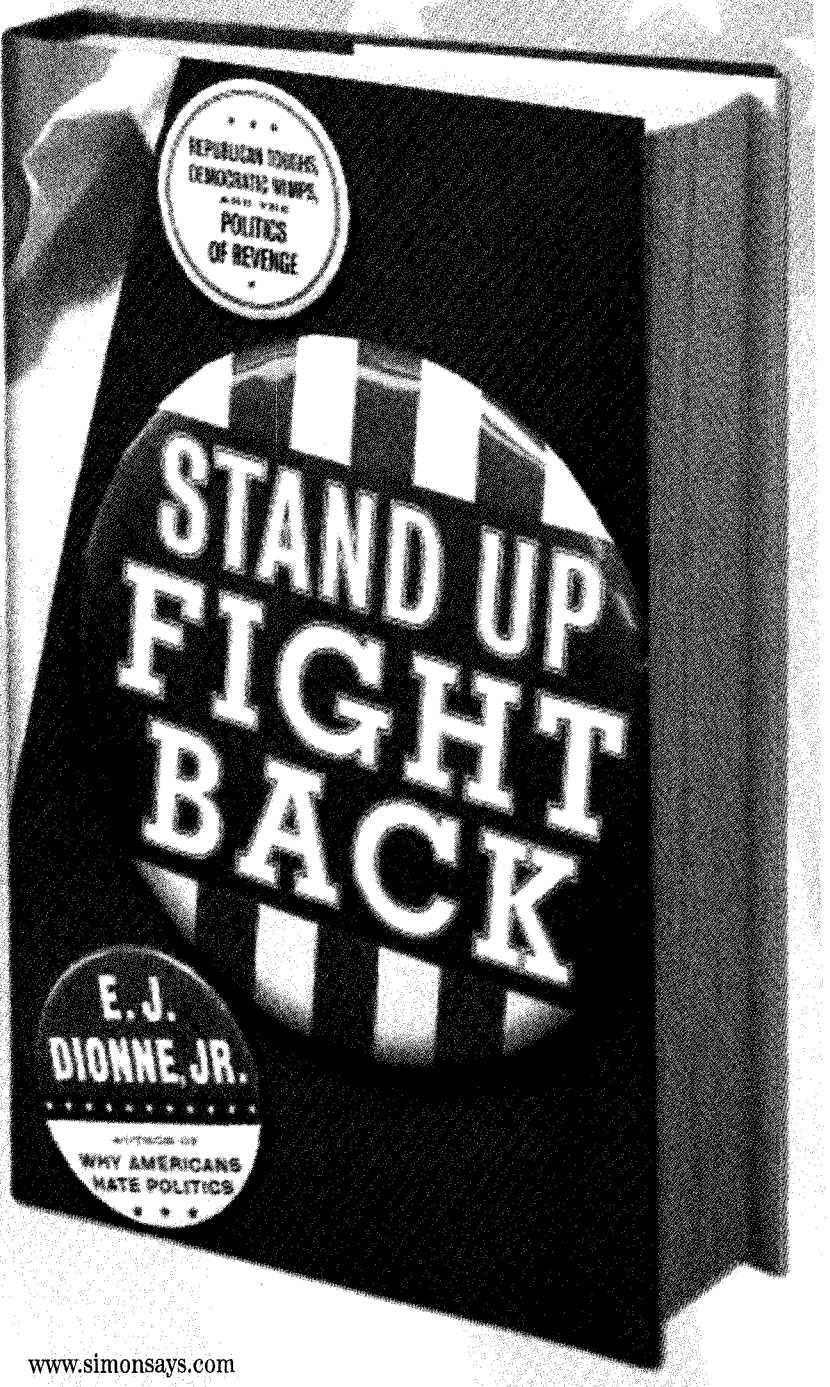

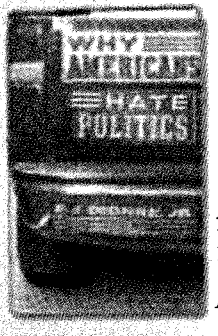

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